The Long Island FISHERMAN

The Largest Weekly Sportfishing Magazine in the United States!

January 8th, 1981 ★ Volume 16, Number 1 ★ 16th Year of Publishing ★ SEVENTY-CENTS

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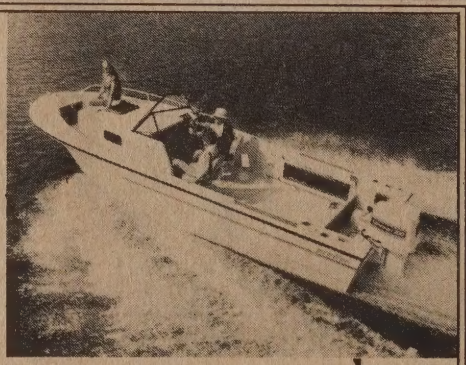

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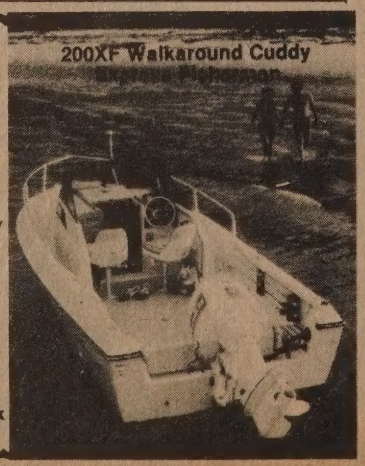

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Pass It On...

STRIPED BASS STUDY GETS FUNDS FOR 2ND YEAR

The second year of a three-year plan to study the decline of the striped bass has been funded with the passage today by the Senate of a House-Senate appropriations bill for the Commerce Department.

The study is the result of legislation introduced by Sen. John H. Chafee (R-R.I.), who last year fought for approval of funds for the second year of the study.

"The striper is a fine species which represents a challenge and a test of endurance to all fishermen," Chafee said. "It needs to be protected. If we don't do something to halt its declining population, the striper may altogether disappear.

"This funding will assure that this very important study of the striped bass is continued and that its goals are accomplished."

The striped bass study is intended to serve as an overall strategy to look into the decline of coastal stocks of striped bass from Maine to North Carolina. It will aid states and the Federal Government in developing sound and equitable plans for managing the fishery and protecting critical habitat. Total spending for the three years will total $4.75 million.

During the second year of the study, $1,750,000 will be spent: The Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior will spend $875,000; the National Marine Fisheries Service of the Commerce Department will spend $750,000.

The Commerce Department expenditure was added to that Department's appropriations by Senator Chafee on the Senate floor in October. It had originally been omitted from that bill.

Senator Ernest F. Hollings (D-S.C.) chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, congratulated Chafee on securing that funding for his amendment.

"We have secured agreement from the House managers for the full $750,000 you sponsored in the appropriation for the striped bass study," Senator Hollings wrote.

"Your strong interest and support in this program is most appreciated, and I am glad to report approval of the full amount."

Both the Commerce and Interior Department appropriations bills were approved by both Houses of Congress this week. They now go to the

Both the Commerce and Interior Department appropriations bills were approved by both Houses.

Chafee said that the funding for this year's study will also come from

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Volume 16, Number 1 **January 8th, 1981**

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About the Cover—

L.I.F. Associate Editor, Al Ristori, displays a tarpon taken from the beach at Parismina Tarpon Rancho in Costa Rica. See his article, "Time for a Break," beginning on page 20. Photo by Al Ristori.

COMING NEXT WEEK: **BOAT SHOW ISSUE**

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Stu Miller ADVERTISING MANAGER
Tim Coleman CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
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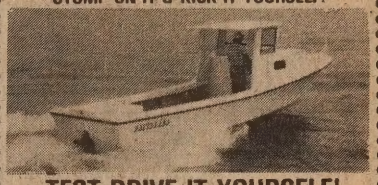

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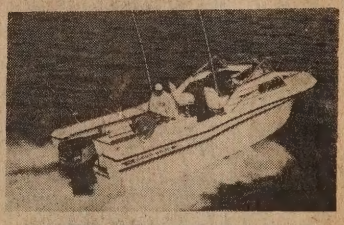

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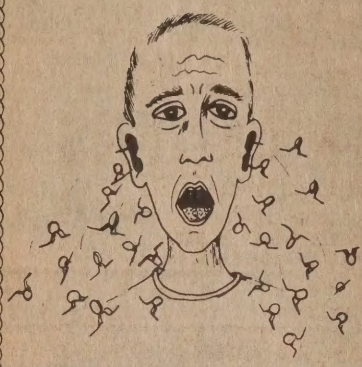

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both departments.

"I plan to remain in the forefront of this effort to bring the striper back to plentiful population levels," Chafee said. "When this emergency study is completed, then we must begin to look at alternatives to implement a sound management plan to restore this mighty fish to its original strength."

BOATING

BOATING COURSE

Flotilla 11-5 of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary will sponsor a public education class, dealing with the arts of boating skills and safety. This will be a 16-lesson course and is the longest known such course, as given by the Auxiliary. Eleven lessons take the student through the art of boat handling to the knowledge of radio-telephone communication. The last five lessons are devoted to the physical aspect of plotting courses on nautical charts.

The course starts on Monday, February 2, 1981 and will be given every Monday evening at 8PM. It will be held in the clubhouse of the Diamond Point Y.C., located at 1350 Paedergat Avenue in the Canarsie section of Brooklyn. A nominal fee of $25 will be charged, which will cover an abundance of books, charts, and instruments necessary to a course as comprehensive as this one.

Need more info? Call Public Education Officer, Harry Frankel, any business day, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at (212) 868-8853; or write to him at the Yacht Club.

BOATING COURSE

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Plumb Beach Flotilla 11-7, will present a 16-week Safe Boating Course beginning on Monday, February 23, 1981 at the Gateway National Recreation Area, Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn, Bldg. 272 at 8PM. This course, the most extensive offered by the Auxiliary will cover basic boating skills and seamanship, chart reading, piloting, marine engines, weather and other interesting and vital subjects.

Upon successful completion of the course, an official certificate will be issued, which may entitle the boat owner to a discount on his marine insurance. In addition, this course is certified by the State of New York for young boaters between the ages of Ten and Sixteen. Upon successful completion of this "Young Boaters Safety Course," a Safety Certificate will be issued to the young boater which is required for him or her to operate a power boat alone.

Both courses are offered free to everyone. There is a charge of $20 to cover the cost of the textbook, chart and piloting tools which will be used in the course; there is no charge for the materials pertaining to the "Young Boaters" course.

To reserve a place in the course, make your check or money order payable to: U.S.C.G. Auxiliary, Flotilla 11-7 and send to N. Melfi, 1778 East 28th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11229. Checks received **before January 31, 1981** will be entitled to a 10% PRE-REGISTRATION DISCOUNT.

For further information, contact Nick Melfi, Public Education Officer at (212) 689-6100 days, or (212) 998-6902 evenings.

BOATING COURSE

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Flotilla 11-06 will hold a fourteen week Basic Skills and Seamanship course at Brooklyn College. This course will begin in January and end in April. The course will cover navigation, marine rules of the road, marlinspike seamanship (splicing of lines), marine communications and basic boat handling.

For information, call Ronald Blicksilver, 10AM to 4PM, at (212) 253-7575.

New Products

DAIWA'S GRAPHITE-COMPOSITE RODS

If you're looking for a rod that's light in the hand, yet extremely sensitive and strong, then you'd better get your hands on a new Daiwa Prolite (TM) Series graphite-composite rod.

Sources at Daiwa indicate the new Prolite rods are not only among the finest performing rods they've ever offered American anglers, but also some of the best values. Prolite rods will average from about $28 to $45 in retail shops.

Although the actual graphite content and construction of the Prolites is a trade secret at this time, Daiwa says that no other graphite-composite rod is made exactly like the Prolite series. They've developed a new process that results in superior actions, strength, feel and balance in the hand.

This is corroborated by Daiwa tackle testers who've been lavish in their praise of the Prolites' actions, strength and sensitivity. Daiwa has one of the most objective and critical tackle testing programs in the industry, which includes such respected names as Vic Dunaway, Al Pflueger, Larry Nixon, Bill Dance, Bobby Murray and Paul Chamblee.

The new Prolite rods include a full range of freshwater spinning, spincast and baitcasting rods as well as saltwater boat and jetty sticks.

Of particular interest to bass fishermen will be the two brand new bass "pitchin'" rods in the series. Both models sport telescoping handles that allow collapsing the 7½ footers to fit bass boat rod storage lockers.

One of the new Daiwa Prolite pitchin' rods is the medium-heavy action that's becoming a standard nationwide. The other is a fast-taper model with a quick tip that's also ideal for tossing lead-head jigs to stripers, yo-yo-ing spoons, and for light saltwater bait and jig casting.

All the baitcasting models in the Prolite series have Fuji® fiberglass-reinforced pistol grip handles. And the unique Daiwa spinning rod handles are of an innovative "warm" design that puts very little metal against the casting hand fingers.

All Prolite rods feature Daiwa's exclusive Dynaflo guides: the harder, stronger, easy-on-your-line guides first introduced by Daiwa in 1979.

Special light-baitcasting models are also featured. These were designed specifically to match-up with Daiwa's four new Prolite light baitcasting reels. The new Prolite reels are designed to accommodate lines as light as six pound test.

For further information, write: Advertising Dept., Daiwa Corp., 14011 S. Normandie Avenue, Gardena, CA 90249.

NEW LOWRANCE '81 CATALOG AVAILABLE

New products and a wealth of information on sport fishing sonar and related equipment are offered in the 1981 catalog of Lowrance Electronics, Inc.

Featured items include a new deep-water graph, a fourth model in the firm's popular in-dash flasher line, an economical flasher unit in both gimbal and portable mounts, and a power pack unit which allows easy conversion of permanent-mount units to portable.

Also included in the 24-page booklet is full information on water temperature gauges, and sonar accessory items which compliment more than 25 "fish finder" and navigational aid instruments produced by the Company, which pioneered sport fishing sonar more than 24 years ago.

For a free copy of the catalog, contact Lowrance Electronics, Inc., Dept. 81, 12000 E. Skelly Drive, Tulsa, OK 74128.

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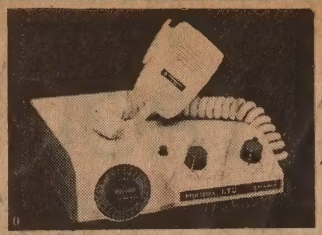

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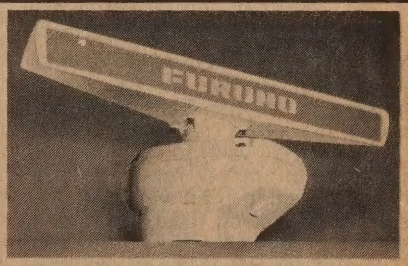

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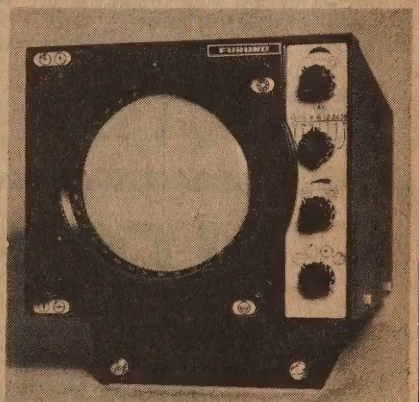

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TACKLE DOCTOR

TROUT CLUBS

I am an avid trout fisherman, fishing for my favorite fish from Maine to the Rockies, but mostly from New England to Pennsylvania and New York. Usually I'm not a joiner of fishing clubs, preferring to fish by myself—my wife or either of my two sons for companionship; but I have noticed embroidered emblems on fly vests during the last few trout seasons with the letters "TU" on it. I know it stands for Trout Unlimited, but I'm not so sure about what it really stands for. As I said, I am not a joiner, but would welcome the opportunity to become a member of a group that supports my favorite fish. Someone should be looking out for the welfare of this magnificent game fish. I read occasionally about the Bass Anglers Sportsmans Society and the many tournaments they promote, This would not be the type of organization I want to join. To me, fishing offers solitude and escape from the pressures of my job in New York; so the very last thing I want to do is join or participate in another mass rat race while I'm fishing. Can you give me some information on Trout Unlimited? I am not a regular reader, but my son Whitney picked up your magazine at the local magazine store. Your assistance is appreciated. D. White

Trout Unlimited is primarily a conservation oriented organization with a national membership. It has done more to protect the trout, trout waters and habitat than any other organization. The main office is now located in Virginia in the Town of Vienna at 118 Park Street S.E. You can write to them for a list of local chapters and membership information. There is no obligation to be an "active" member, since your dues alone are welcomed to help further the conservation cause of the organization; but we think you will be pleasantly surprised at the good fellowship, sportsmanship and fun you can have by being an active member at the chapter level.

* * *

I have just purchased four Penn 3/0 Senators which I would like to use for chumming and jigging bluefish. How do you think these reels will do? Also, I have six Penn 713Z spinfishers which I use mainly for weakfishing. How would these be for jigging mackerel? Could you please tell me of a rod made by Fenwick that is good for weakfishing and jigging for mackerel. If you feel the 713Z is not suited for mackerel fishing, could you recommend another type of reel manufactured by Penn. Finally, do you know of any tackle dealers or anyone who sells rods which were custom made, and are now slightly used but still in good shape?

John Purzycki

Whew--that's a lot of questions! Yes, the Penn 3/0s are okay for chumming and jigging bluefish, although most fishermen are leaning more towards smaller reels like the Penn 500, Daiwa 30H or even smaller Shimano 500 Bantam, Ambassadeurs, Penn 930 and Daiwa Millionaires.

The Penn 713Z reels are ideal for weakfish and can certainly be used for jigging mackerel. Most fishermen prefer a conventional reel when mackerel fishing because you have more control over the jig and mackerel rig. Many times the fish will hit the rig on the way down and you can't feel this with a spinning outfit. Many anglers prefer the spinning tackle for this kind of fishing; so there is nothing wrong in using it—it's just that conventional tackle is preferred by the so-called "hot shot" anglers who do seem to catch more fish. Try the Penn 930 or 940. Fenwick has several good rods for weakfish depending on what type of rod you like. The PLS 65, PLS 70 and PLS 75 range from 6½' to 7½' and would be suitable. My favorite is the seven footer. Similar rods are made by Fenwick in graphite. I know of no specific store or tackle shop that sells used tackle on a regular basis, yet many shops do occasionally have slightly used merchandise for sale. All we can suggest is that you check with local stores on a regular basis to see what they may have.

* * *

Do polarizing sunglasses really help when you are fishing, or is it a bunch of hyped-up stuff from the fancy magazines? *John Holly*

No! It is definitely not a super hype from so-called "fancy magazines." There IS an advantage to wearing polarized glasses no matter where you fish. Polarized sunglasses allow the angler to "see into" the water by eliminating the glare off the surface of the water. Whether you fish in a trout stream, along the surf, in your own boat or on a party boat, the glasses are an advantage. Not only can you spot game fish better, but you see your lures and baits better. Often, the flash of blues or bonito in a chum slick goes unnoticed by glassless fishermen, while the angler equipped with the polarized shades can see the fish and adapt his fishing methods to get a better catch.

There are three colors to choose from: tan, grey and green. Most fishermen use the green, but the tan is favored by fishermen in the shallow water of a trout stream or down south on a bonefish flat. There is no real benefit of glass over plastic, but the glass will be more durable—also more expensive.

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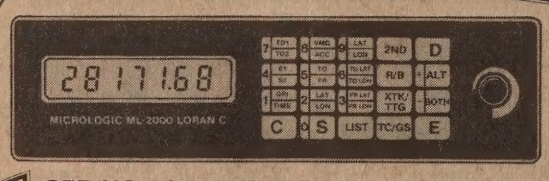

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LOOKING BACK AT 1980

by Al Ristori

In our last column we reviewed the 1980 fishing season and paid special attention to the discouraging striped bass situation. Now let's look at some of the more encouraging developments.

After many years of little or no activity, the Mud Hole area off the north Jersey coast produced a big run of giant tuna for a second straight season. Indeed, this particular run was, by far, the greatest in the history of giant tuna fishing in the Mud Hole—in terms of individual fish size. In the "good old days," there were a great many "small" giants in the three to five hundred pound class, but tuna of even seven hundred pounds were quite unusual. Of course, that was pretty much the case everywhere until 1970. Giants of eight hundred pounds were considered to be trophy fish even at Montauk and in New England. The first thousand pounder was finally taken at Prince Edward Island in 1970, and the record has advanced steadily since then.

Despite the general increase in size among domestic tuna (particularly since 1975), the Mud Hole area had not shared in this good fortune until the 1980 season. Until 1979, the New Jersey tuna record stood at a "mere" 796 lbs.—a size that would be considered "average" in Massachusetts Bay, and "small" in Canada. What's more, Joseph Casale caught that tuna back in 1973, and it wasn't even challenged during the decade until Captain Bob Pisano came in with a 956 lb. giant at the end of the big November, 1979 run. Last year, Bob put that record away twice in one day right at the beginning of the run in September. First, Roy Parsons boated a 963 lber.—and then your reporter hooked into a 1,022 lber. Though the latter fish still remains the only "grander" ever caught west or south of the Block Island area, there were quite a few eight and nine hundred pound giants taken in the Mud Hole last fall—including one from a party boat. What's more, many six and seven hundred pound tuna (which would have been worthy of headlines in any other year) were routinely brought to dockside.

The oddest thing about this run was the fact that it occurred as giant tuna fishing has been declining seriously in all other sport fishing areas. The great year classes of the late Fifties and early Sixties have provided us with the "super giants" of recent years, but the only strong year class since then was spawned in 1973. Those fish are today's "mini-giants" of three to four hundred pounds—and they did provide some action this summer at Block Island, and also during the October portion of the Mud Hole run. At this stage of development, the "mini-giants" seem to prefer more southerly waters—which may be why the northern fisheries (concentrating on the older fish) are declining so rapidly. Despite increased daily quotas, all the hooks and harpoons in New England couldn't come close to filling their quota, and early reports from Canada tell a similar story. A few very large tuna were caught by Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Montauk boats off Block Island last summer, but that fishing was down considerably from recent years. A decent pick of "mini-giants" and some very good late summer fishing (with live bait and jigs) for large schoolies save the season.

Yet, at the same time, the Mud Hole experienced its best giant tuna fishing in history! Catches of up to five per boat (the legal weekly limit) in one day were recorded, and there were many days (even weekends) when lots of boats had two or three apiece. Indeed, the action was much better than the catches indicate. Many local skippers had never tangled with fish of this size before. During the previous fall's run, the tuna were of mixed sizes, but mostly very large schoolies—with only an occasional giant mixed in. At the beginning of this run there was nothing under five hundred pounds, and a great many fish bigger than had ever been seen in this area before. Anglers fishing with eighty pound rigs soon found that they were undergunned. Lines were being broken, reels stripped, and heavy mono leaders wore out as giants were fought for hours on end. By the time everyone got squared away, the biggest fish had passed by—and the season ended in mid-October, about a month sooner than in 1979.

Is all this a sign of things to come? Your guess is as good as mine, but at least there is once again a lot of hope. The last two runs have been completely different. The first didn't start until October and lasted well into November. It also featured great quantities of smaller fish. Last year's run started in September, was over before November—and was almost entirely composed of giants. It doesn't appear as if we got the same body of fish back that first appeared in 1979. This might mean that these were just random runs of tuna, or it may mean that cleaner waters and more bottom life is proving attractive to all classes of tuna. Let's hope that the latter is the case. If so, the U.S. Atlantic Tuna Tournament (which is moving to Montauk this year) may finally be able to return to the area of its origin!

Another encouraging sign from last year was the excellent summer run of weakfish. During July there was fishing that often bordered on the incredible all the way from the Jersey coast into Long Island Sound. Commercial hook and liners on the Tin Can Grounds were catching so many weaks that they had to return to port to unload their catch before going out for the next tide. Party boat jigging was outstanding, and shore anglers got their share of the action. As with the tuna, this was the second year in a row that we've had an excellent July run of weakfish. Yet, each of those years it's come as almost a surprise—following a mediocre spring spawning run.

The formerly outstanding spring fishing in Delaware, Great South, and Peconic Bays has turned quite spotty during the last few years. Some big catches are still made from time to time; but the average catch is way down, and the angler has to be both quite sharp and a bit lucky to come up with the big score. There still is no better time to catch a record-sized weakfish than early in the May spawning run, as the biggest spawn-laden fish arrive first—and after spawning probably won't attain such a size again throughout the season. The one hopeful sign about last spring's weakfishing was the return to Peconic Bay of small weakfish. One day on the Middle Grounds, I was surprised to find steady action from two to four pound weakfish, plus some so small that they just had to go back. That was the biggest concentration of weaks that size I've seen since the present run started building up at the beginning of the last decade—at which time they were all in that size class.

When the long absent weakfish miraculously re-appeared about ten years ago, I had high hopes that there

(Continued on page 35.)

OLD TIMER'S CORNER

"REFLECTIONS"

by Matt Ahern

Over the years, the stories related in the Old-Timers' Corner have, on occasion, caused several readers to charge me with being a mawkish sentimentalist, a romanticist given to flights of fancy, even an unmitigated bearer of falsehood. On the first two allegations, I admit my guilt—I stand convicted. In defense, however, I must say I try always to keep from being unduly mawkish, overly sentimental, or becoming that starry-eyed pilot of fanciful flight, which, when given the scope of the storied events, is sometimes difficult to avoid. As for the charge of being a bearer of falsehood, which many readers who fished through that golden period may regard as the unkindest cut of all—this bothers me not at all.

For I understand.

I know it is indeed difficult for one who has not fished through those glorious years to believe wondrous stories of superb bottom fish, stories which tell of one fisherman catching 105 cod, for instance; of another catching nothing but doormat fluke, or of the days when decking twenty-five or more fluke by each party boat fisherman caused no undue comment.

Especially is this so when a beginner to our sport returns home with a disappointing catch. I don't blame this fellow one bit for sitting down and dashing off a scorching letter, for I certainly sympathize and understand this fisherman's frustration. However, be that as it may, my head, while bloodied, is still unbowed.

As I've mentioned many times in this column, fishermen of fifty or sixty years ago (and I include myself in this group) never realized they had it so good. Sure, we had our slow days; we didn't mohawk the fish every trip, not by a long shot. But on our worst days, once the basics were learned, even the novice returned home with something to show for his efforts. You may be sure there were few grumpy bottom fishermen fifty or sixty years ago.

And yet, knowing all this, and meeting with much success just about every time we went out, I can still recall wondering how it must have been before my day. I suppose every fisherman worth his salt has done that. The fact that you are interested in this column is its own proof.

Every fisherman I know is an inquisitive soul. And well he should be, for without this streak of curiosity, he would get nowhere. And to aid in this curiosity as to how the other fellow was doing at the time, the newspapers of the day carried excellent fishing columns. There was the Daily News, plus the Hearst newspapers: Daily Mirror, New York Evening Journal, and the New York American. The New York Times also carried a fishing column, but much of its content was beyond the average fisherman's interest.

"We didn't mohawk the fish every trip, but we did okay."

What we tens of thousands of fishermen were interested in was the bottom fishing activity (just as it is today). And those four newspapers certainly catered to the sinker bouncing fraternity. Their sports editors were well aware of this intense interest and they hired the best men for the job; fishermen all. The party boat skippers of the time cheerfully spent hard-earned dollars on advertising. This was probably one of the few instances in life when everyone concerned got value received, for—to a man—the fishermen were faithful.

I don't know if the name Fred Fletcher is familiar to you, but it seems quite unlikely unless you are from the old school. Fred was the fishing columnist for the Daily News. To fishermen of those long-gone days, Fred's word was the bible for saltwater activities—just as Frank Keating's now sadly missed columns were gospel to many of today's fishermen. These two gentlemen were tops in their field, although I don't mean to take anything away from Dick Cornish, Jim Hurley, and Jack Brawley who were also popular fishing scribes of the day. We shall never see their like again.

It wasn't unusual to meet these fellows on the fishing scene. Either one might be waiting at the dock when your party boat returned, or perhaps fishing beside you at any time. They shared the trials and tribulations of the bottom fishing game along with those multitudes of other sinker bouncers. These fishing scribes knew the score...you bet. And you couldn't con them.

I say this from firsthand experience. I recall one time when several fishermen of my acquaintance attempted to do just that.

One fall weekend back in 1931 or so, these fellows got together and wrote up a fishing report to end all

fishing reports. It was gleefully sent to Fred Fletcher who was, as I say, the most popular fishing reporter of his day. The report itself was well done; it was subtle and contained just enough truth to make it sound legitimate. Only those who had been through the fishing mill for years could detect where truth ended and the con job took over. Those fellows had chosen their subject well—no question about that. But that report never saw the light of day in the Daily News. Call it sixth sense, call it what you will—you couldn't con Fred Fletcher. He knew!

And with this in mind, let me ask you something. Have you noticed anything familiar in all this? I'm sure you have. Those fishing reports you read in The Fisherman are put together by a staff who adhere religiously to that concept. You can't con them, either. Shades of Fred Fletcher! It is not surprising to me that those fishing reports have become one of the most popular columns in this magazine. We fishermen will always have need for up-to-date, truthful fishing reports.

I know that this is the first column of the New Year and I hate to start off in a grouchy mood. But tell me, if we can have accurate fishing reports, why can't we have more accurate weather reports?

I realize that fishing reports tell of what has already occurred; therefore, it is foolproof. Weather reports, on the other hand, tell us only what we may expect in the next few hours, which makes accurate forecasting difficult. (I put little stock in five-day forecasts.) Nature has always held the deciding hand in this, and always will. Everyone understands that. This is not my gripe. My gripe is with those self-styled experts who dispense this knowledge.

Years ago before television and super-duper electronic weather maps, fishermen who wanted to know what weather to expect, simply turned on their radios, or checked local newspapers—and by so doing, received more accurate information than they do today. Certainly, errors were made and gripes, complaints, and what have you, were just as harsh as today. Nature is still the boss.

But what have we today?

Outside of a few weather reporters who sensibly keep a low profile (knowing, I suppose, that they have little knowledge of the subject), we have some who turn the serious reporting of weather into a fun thing. When they goof—as they certainly did on Saturday, October 25 last year—they merely gloss over their boo-boos, giving them scant, if any, attention. But let them come up with an accurate forecast and there is self-praise aplenty.

Weather forecasting isn't a plaything. Lives are often lost, business affected; especially does this apply to those of us who are in any way involved with outdoor activities. Weather forecasting should have no room for those who consider it a fun thing—ratings or no ratings.

Years ago during television's infancy we had a weatherman (notice I didn't say weather reporter—there is a difference) who was sponsored by Con Edison. This highly enlightened fellow would give weather reports as put out by our U.S. Weather Bureau (just as is done today), but this gentleman put himself on the line many times. A favorite comment was: "That is what the Weather Bureau says, but this is what I think will happen..." And quite often this fellow hit it right on the nose. Needless to say, this weatherman enjoyed a huge, dedicated audience.

Why can't we have someone like that today?

Frank Ferraro of Brooklyn is December's winner of the Shakespeare spinning reel. Frank related tales of pier fishing. Interesting reading. Congratulations!

Incidentally, this brings the letter-writing contest to a close. I thank each and every one of you fishermen who took time to write me. Your efforts to enlighten the fishing scene were much appreciated.

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FISH TALK

What's In Store For 1981?

by William A. Muller

FOR YOU! The reader response to our 1980 **Win An Ugly Stik** contest was extremely successful—as you are all aware by now. Shakespeare Tackle and The Long Island Fisherman were proud to give away nine Ugly Stiks in 1980. In the fall of 1980, we talked with Shakespeare about the prospects for another contest in 1981 and they gave us a resounding yes! Therefore, we can now announce the conditions of the contest for 1981. The PRIZE will be a new Shakespeare **Sigma** spinning reel, which is a brand new line of reels that features a skirted spool and a drag setting mechanism below the reel's main housing unit that permits a smooth and fast drag adjustment. We took a close-up look at these reels and we can tell you that they are real beauties. In addition, Shakespeare has sweetened the pot for '81. A spool of a new monofilament line will also be sent with the reel; this new line has demonstrated itself to be of high quality. Field testers speak of high knot strength and smooth casting. Thus, a Sigma Reel and a spool of the Sigma line will be sent to each monthly winner April through November. The company will also send you a Shakespeare fishing hat, too. We hope that these three items will improve both your fishing fun and your fishing luck!

HOW CAN I WIN? The rules will stay the same as last year; that is, The Fisherman will select the best Fish Talk letter of the month as the winner. The letters do not have to be anecdotal or questions. To qualify to win the reel, line, and hat, all you need do is write in and share your thoughts, opinions, questions, and stories with us. The letter need not be long. Last year, some readers believed that the longer the letter, the better would be their chances of winning. Actually, very long letters are more difficult to work with since long, rambling discussions and anecdotes are hard to work into the column because the model of the column falls within a specific number of words. I can offer some advice about how to win. Perhaps this advice applies particularly to younger readers. Don't strain! Don't try to be what you aren't! We aren't looking for young undiscovered Hemingways.

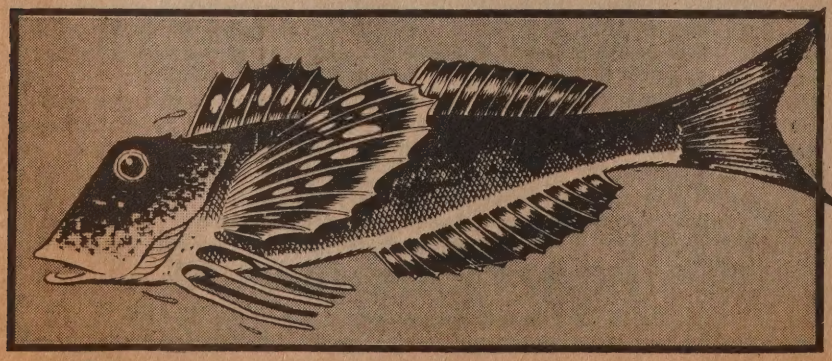
PURPOSE! The purpose of this contest is to allow some of our readers to win quality fishing tackle and to promote the sharing of views between all of us. Last year's flood of letters was impressive and many readers took the time to tell us at The Fisherman that many of the letters we printed offered fresh slants on several topics. We believe it's healthy for members of a family to share each other's knowledge. Good luck.

ADDRESS YOUR LETTERS TO:

WILLIAM A. MULLER
MANAGING EDITOR
THE L. I. FISHERMAN
BOX 1994
SAG HARBOR, N.Y. 11963

SALVATORE AGLIANO wrote in to ask for some help with his fish identification interest. Although most of the fish taken in our local waters are predictable and easy to identify, Sal is correct that from time to time we may come across a species that isn't typically caught here. I remember as a kid I caught several fish that resembled pompano or permit in shape. I didn't know how to go about identifying those fish at that time and so today I still don't know what they were. Sal asks: "Could you please tell me if there are any books available that classify sea creatures of the northeast region. I need a book that gives complete physical descriptions of each species with detailed illustrations, feeding habits, migratory patterns, spawning, etc. Libraries and book stores have been of little help, since the books that they have are generally too general..." Sal's letter was long and we don't have the space to reprint the entire text, so we'll have to use excerpts. In response to your first question, I think that we can be of some assistance. First, in the early years of this column, we gave careful descriptions and habits of most of the species that one might encounter in Long Island waters either as abundant or rare catches. Thus, those early issues (1976-1978) may be some help if you wish to refer to them. Second, the most comprehensive text would be "Fishes of the Gulf of Maine." Don't be misled by the word Maine. All the information that you would ever need is in there. However, this text may be a little hard to come by, but you are likely to find it in a big college library. You live in Brooklyn and so you might want to consult the Brooklyn College Library. If that fails, there is the 42nd Street library and the excellent library at the American Museum of Natural History. Third, if it is impossible to utilize these resources, there are several books available that should give you all that you need to help you identify what you catch—although these additional books are not quite as detailed as the Gulf of Maine book. You, therefore, may want to look at the Biology of Fishes by Bond that is published by Saunders, and the Fishes of the World, published by Knopf.

SAL'S UNUSUAL FISH. "Quite often while fishing I have encountered species I could not identify. At one time it was an amberjack, another time a sturgeon, and yet another time it was a white perch. I'll admit that usually the captain or mate of a party boat or some knowledgeable angler can assist with the identification, but their well-meaning help can be misleading, too. Then there is the problem of local names. **Lafayettes** in New York are **spot** in Virginia. **Blackfish** in New York are **tautog** in New England. **Flounders** in New York are **flats** in New England. These common name differences can also throw a fella off the track." Yes, local common names are an I.D. problem. You mention white perch and that's interesting, because as a youngster I had the same problem with the same fish, which brings us to another potential I.D. difficulty. As a young



boy, I did most of my fishing in fresh water. I had caught white perch, but they were smaller and more silvery than their cousins taken in sea water. When I caught my first sea run white perch it did not resemble its landlocked cousin and I was stumped even though by that time I was very familiar with many marine and freshwater species. Finally, I found a fisheries biologist who helped me out with the I.D. He also pointed me in the direction of reading more about anadromous fishes (fish that spawn in freshwater and feed in saltwater). It was an investigation that has lasted a lifetime.

WILL THE REAL SEA ROBIN PLEASE STAND UP? Sal continues: "In my experiences I have also come across fish that look alike, but not identical. Take, for example, sea robins. I have observed several different looking fish (at least four) that were called sea robins. Are there different species of sea robin or are they caught at different stages of metamorphosis?" There are not several species of sea robins, but there are several species of 'sculpins.' Members of this group look very much alike. However, they do differ in color patterns, size, shape of external anatomical features, and there are other differences. To the fisherman who might be new to the experience of catching different sculpins, the overwhelming sense of similarity may overshadow the differences. The book "Fishes of the Gulf of Maine," gives a thorough account of the sculpins. Fishes of the World also provides more than enough information to help the angler identify any sculpins caught in our waters.

PROJECTS. In 1981 we also plan a number of projects that we hope may improve the quality of fishing in our area. There are many things that interested people can do, but obviously we can never guarantee that any of these efforts will put more fish in the box or on the stringer. Therefore, when we say that we will attempt to improve "the quality of fishing in our waters," we refer to the overall. If more access can be opened to surf fishermen, then this access gives us a new and different place to fish and that improves the quality of the fishing experiences in some small measure. If new techniques can be pioneered, then this, too, stimulates enthusiasm and improves our fishing. What are these projects? Well, we hope to offer a new slant on some of our regular columns and we expect to continue to do battle with industry and government interests whose intent it might be to take something away from the quality of our fishing.

PREDICTIONS FOR 1981. I don't usually get involved in predictions for a very good reason. You see, I don't know any more than anybody else and probably a lot less than many. However, I have been goaded by many into looking into my crystal ball. Okay, I'm willing as long as we all know that it's being done just in fun. So, I've got my tongue-in-cheek and I'm ready.

BOAT FISHING! I really expect that the flounder season will be a very good one in 1981 in most places, if not everywhere. I've come to this conclusion because I have observed a tremendous number of very small flounders in the bays in the last few years. Many of these should be big enough next spring to help entertain us. Most of all, I'm expecting a decent cluster of good weather days this spring. In the last few years, we have been plagued by wind and cold. These adverse weather conditions are not conducive to good floundering. The odds are in our favor that this spring will be halfway decent. I look for weakfishing to continue its downward turn of recent years. Summer run weaks, although smaller, will be abundant in spite of the fact that the early spring tiderunners just won't be there in the numbers they used to swarm in with. Yet, we can look for some real giants among those that are caught. Porgies and fluke should continue to be mediocre. We believe that large commercial harvests during inward migration are contributing to this state of affairs. Mind you now, that doesn't mean that it isn't possible to have any number of great days, but two to three week runs of excellent fishing probably will not occur. Bass are in the pits of their cycle and we have little evidence that there will be any improvement except in the western Sound where fishing for schoolies will again be good. Blues should be very abundant and the pattern of 1980 should repeat; that is, good numbers of big choppers offshore and great numbers of mostly small to medium sized fish inshore. Cod, pollack, and billfish are question marks. Blackfishing should be solid in season. Sharks should continue to provide offshore anglers with plenty of action.

SURF! The surf fishing scene has not been good in the last few years and we don't see any reason to expect that it will turn around in 1981. Sure, there are those who have had good seasons and there will be a decent share of blitzes, but the years of great abundance aren't with us now, so the surf fisherman will have to work very hard for what he or she catches on Long Island. Weaks will be close to shore early, but again, fewer and larger will be the watchword. Bass are big (those that are left from the great year classes of the late 1960s and 1971), but they aren't abundant. Only the sharpies will take any numbers of the bass this year, I feel. Blues are always a curiosity to predict because they are less patterned than bass or weaks. Still, I feel that there will be good numbers of medium fish and enough slammers to interest all of us. I think we'll have to wait for the fall to see any numbers of the big choppers hit the beach.

WELL, THAT'S THE WAY I see it! How about you? What kind of year do you expect to have?

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SURF FISHING

FLOTATION DEVICES

by Don Avondolio

Many different articles have been written about the popular sport of saltwater fishing in the surf. Most have contributed how-to, where-to and equipment information to the reader and although the majority of articles have been interesting, informative, and exciting to read, I have always noticed one important item omitted from the equipment section; that is, the mention of a flotation device which could be worn, or carried and used in an emergency.

Most active surfmen use either hip or chest type waders (the latter being the most popular) to enter waters either to gain casting distance, or to maneuver into better fishing position around reefs, rocks, sandbars, etc. The surfman may even have to shift from his original position during battle with a large fish to avoid tangling with obstructions. Furthermore, pier, dock, or jetty fishermen use waders to advantage for protection from breaking waves, wash, or sometimes to enter deeper waters to recover snagged lures, or bottom rigs. During all these movements, sudden falling, tripping, or slipping could occur and seriously panic the fisherman, possibly placing him below water level. Even though boat fishermen are constantly reminded of personal flotation devices (PFDs) by the Coast Guard, Auxiliary Police and Red Cross, etc., little is mentioned to the surf fisherman about these devices. Possibly the reason lies in the relatively small proportion of surf to boat fishermen; or maybe the lax, casual attitude toward safety in surf fishing. I am sure most beach or jetty, land-based fishermen simply feel confident that drowning is only a remote possibility. I've read about several land-based drowning incidents in the past, and I feel that these incidents are directly related to this article and should be mentioned. These incidents are not described to scare the surf fisherman, but to emphasize the need for flotation devices. A few years ago at the Northport warm water outflow several land-based fishermen were fishing during a rainy, foggy condition standing on a bar adjacent to the deep channel outflow trough. One of these fishermen was reported to have strayed off the bar into the sluiceway by accident. Possibly weather conditions contributed to his unfortunate error. His body was washed up several days later near a North Shore beach. This has not been the only drowning incident reported at this popular surf fishing spot. Another recent incident occurred on Long Island's South Shore. A surf fisherman was seen falling into the water near a jetty at Moriches Inlet. He could have fallen because of bad footing, or maybe by slipping on a slimy rock. His body was carried out into the turbulent current, away from land, with his wader boots observed up-ended out of the water. I, myself, many years ago experienced a potentially dangerous situation at a local North Shore beach fishing spot.

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Two friends and I were fishing an ebbing low tide situation that allowed us to cast into deeper water. As time passed the tide eventually reversed flow towards us as we stood on a fairly high sand bar. Since fishing was slow, we kept busy conversing back and forth, not noticing our surrounding radical depths of sandy bottom. We were eventually engulfed with water up to our wader tops, preventing retreat to our car or beach location. The tide had filled the surrounding cuts to a point that would force us below water level. Fortunately with a little yelling and hand waving, we attracted attention of the beach lifeguard. We were all assisted to shore with the help of a small rowboat. At that time, we were informed by the lifeguard that embarrassing occurrences similar to ours were not uncommon at this beach.

Since the predominant type of equipment used in surf fishing are the waders, we should investigate the effect of waders on swimming, floating, and general safety while being worn. This effect was discussed carefully in a previously published article by a local magazine some years ago. An average size surf fisherman was used for the experiment, equipped with chest waders and tightly fitted rain parka top. He wore a wader belt tightly around his waist over the waders. As part of the experiment, several times he submerged himself into deep water above head level. It was concluded that swimming with waders was very difficult, and eventually the cumbersome rubber had to be cut off with a knife to facilitate swimming. Pockets of air trapped in the parka hood and wader leg areas provided buoyancy to some degree. Once the trapped air was released, the man was forced to tread water to remain on top. Panicking, splashing, and use of excess movements with waders on would only contribute towards loss of critically needed body warmth. As a special point, we should remember that this was a controlled, planned experiment and during an actual drowning encounter the man's actions might have been more hard-pressed. By this test experiment, we could definitely conclude that another more positive means of flotation is required to protect the average surf fisherman placed in a potential drowning situation. Incidentally, many believe that drowning victims are non-swimmers. Being able to swim is just not good enough. He or she must overcome turbulent curents, murky water visibility and other impediments; e.g., scattered obstructions such as rocks, boulders that could hamper normal swimming motion. Once the person's face is submerged, water enters the nose, and into the lungs and stomach. This is very unpleasant and causes intense coughing and possible vomiting. The term "hypothermia" refers to sub-normal body temperature and is the

(Continued on next page.)

Flotation coats (left) Stearns, (right) Empress.

Res-Q-Pak shown inflated.

Res-Q-Pak worn clipped to surf fisherman's wader suspenders.

effect of losing body heat to the water—a major contributing factor to drowning. Once an individual succumbs to hypothermia, he will lose consciousness and then drown.

As mentioned previously, most surf fishermen use waders and that's why this article is related to flotation equipment used in conjunction with waders. There are several excellent types and styles of flotation devices on the market designed to help resist potential drowning situations. Before summarizing the major devices, I must say that a wader belt should be a mandatory addition to chest wader equipment. It is of utmost importance that we prevent water from entering the uppermost part of our waders. We established by the earlier mentioned wader experiment that instant release or closure of a chest wader belt was most important. The belt manufactured and designed by Bob Jacklin, is one of the best on the market. This belt is available in two sizes: regular 44" and large 52". The belt holds securely by locking firmly, yet it releases quickly if you want to get rid of it with the fingers of one hand. While on the subject of waders, the Uni-Royal Corp. manufactures a stocking foot style wader that weighs twelve ounces and folds up into a small zippered bag for easy carrying. Several critics have stated that this wader, made from polyurethane coated nylon, is designed to take rough handling and is also highly abrasion resistant. These waders are sold in both tight and loose fitting upper chest sizes to allow for various thicknesses of upper body clothing that is worn. The feature most prevalent is that the waders have an inflatable upper air chamber surrounding the waist section which can be inflated orally. This chamber not only discourages water from entering the lower boot section, but provides some buoyancy in case of a sudden fall into the brine. This type of wader (stocking foot) is predominantly used for rocky, or pebble type bottom; and can be used for sandy beach areas if proper socks and shoes are purchased to discourage sand from entering and abrading the stocking foot area.

There are several portable miniature flotation devices that can be clipped on the parka or wader top as preferred. The first is called Res-Q-Pak by Ero Industries, which is about the size of a cigarette pack, with a locking clip attached. Once squeezed and released, it is actuated within a few seconds by an internal Co-2 cartridge. A two-foot-long buoyant float is released which can float a 250 lb. man for hours. Another portable instant release float device is the Aqua-Matic by Gladding Corp., which is attached to a belt-like assembly. It is shaped like a large cartridge, weighs eight ounces and inflates an air bladder within three seconds after water enters a small opening in the cartridge. Refill kits are available: three CO-2 cartridge assembly for $2.50. This device must be baffled by the wearer, so that salt, or rainwater does not accidentally actuate the bladder. Another device that combines features of a wader belt and also emergency flotation device is distributed by both the Leonard Co. and Orvis Corporation. By squeezing one side of the belt (which is worn around the wader top section), a circular tube inflates within ten seconds, pops out of the belt and up around the armpit area. This tube is advertised to support a 300 lb. weight for as long as seventy-two hours. CO-2 replacement cartridges (eight per pack) sell for approximately $8. Incidentally, there is a back-up oral mouth inflator tube in case you want to test inflation. Vests are also examples of flotation devices. Fairly flat profile rubber vests, shaped like a horseshoe with CO-2 cartridge and oral inflation chambers are used by skin divers. These are called buoyancy compensating vests and are sold in most dive shops. They could be worn under loose fitting clothing or over wader tops as preferred. One factor that should be considered when actuating all these devices, is that the rubber material could be pierced accidentally by hooks or sharp objects rendering the device inoperative. So, special care and handling should be considered when selecting and using these devices. Frequent examination and even periodic test inflation should be initiated. After eight years of wearing my Res-Q-Pak, I activated the CO-2 cartridge and found the float to be in perfect condition. (see photo.) The Stearns Corp., a major manufacturer of PFDs and natutical clothing of various types, produces a deluxe inflatable fishing vest featuring five storage pockets with velcro closures. This vest is very compact and features a minimum of bulk. It contains a hidden CO-2 device and also permits inflation by oral means. This vest is obtainable in a green nylon or tan cotton-polyester outer shell with a nylon mesh inner lining for ventilation.

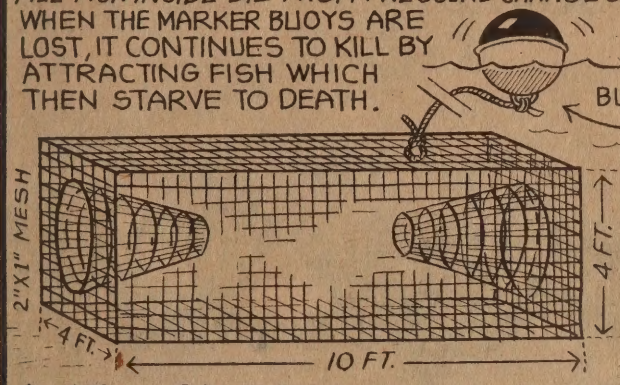
The Stearns Co. also recently introduced an extremely lightweight nylon boating jacket that looks like a wind-breaker. It also features a concealed oral inflation element for safety. This jacket, BJ-80, features a corrosion resistant nylon zipper and concealed storm cuffs, with large flap pockets and attached hood. For many years, Stearns, Empress and Cris-Craft Companies have produced a heavy duty type of float coat. The material used for these coats, generally a closed cell foam of either polyvinyl chloride or polyethelene not only provides a high degree of hypothermia protection, but also buoyancy. This means that the coats are self-buoyant and do not require an air chamber for flotation. Some of these jackets are fairly stiff in construction and could be slightly umcomfortable to the wearer. It seems that the more expensive coats feature a better quality of cut and design, which offers more flexibility and comfort. Nevertheless, all the jackets in this category should be acceptable for comfort once used for a period of time. These coats feature either a nylon or polyurethane outer shell and offer slash pockets and a stand-up collar. Other options offered depending on model numbers are storm cuffs, attached hood, and nylon zippers in lieu of the metal type. It would be most practical in choosing these jackets to actually try the different styles on prior to purchase. The jackets are available at better marine supply houses and also through mail order marine, tackle dealers. I have purposely avoided mentioning any bulky, relatively heavy PFD devices that are ideal for use on boats because they are not really practical for surf fishermen. I have also intentionally omitted skin diver suits (wet suits) primarily because they fall into a specialized category of surf fishing equipment. This is not to imply that they should be excluded in conjunction with flotation devices. The excellent hypothermia protection offered by these suits have always been recognized.

If I have convinced even one surf, pier, or jetty fisherman to wear or carry one of these various flotation devices, then I have achieved at least a small part of my objective. The National Safety Council stated that every year approximately 8,000 people drown, making drowning the third leading cause of accidental deaths in the U.S. This article is not to be misconstrued that a flotation device is the complete solution to possible drowning incidents; we must also realize that survival in cold water (about 50°) is another problem to be faced. The U.S. Coast Guard publishes a free pamphlet called "Hypothermia and Cold Water Survival" which is part of educational material that should be read in addition to this article. A flotation device used with proper safety procedure will double the survival time when compared to not having the device in situations of water immersion. What the flotation device will do is enable the wearer to maneuver easily, regain composure, and float on the surface while conscious. Some types will float the person while unconscious. As stated in the pamphlet, a flotation device will keep a person calmer and help him to conserve energy which is needed to overcome hypothermia. Consider the price of a flotation device versus the value of your life and I am sure that you'll make the right choice. If you surf fish the North or South Shores, the Montauk and North Fork beaches, or wherever, I am sure you'll convince yourself. Each flotation device described has its own tradeoffs (advantages and disadvantages); evaluate your own personal surf fishing situations, then consider price, convenience, comfort and select a flotation device to suit yourself. You might need it some day.

FISH & MARINE NEWS

BY FRED GUARDINEER

FISH TRAPS ARE BAD NEWS... THE RECENT INCREASE IN FISH TRAPS IS A PROBLEM ALL ALONG THE EAST COAST. GAMEFISH AND OTHER VALUABLE FISH ARE ATTRACTED TO THESE HEAVY FENCEWIRE TRAPS USUALLY SET BELOW 50 FT. DEPTHS. WHEN PULLED UP, *ALL FISH INSIDE DIE FROM PRESSURE CHANGES.* WHEN THE MARKER BUOYS ARE LOST, IT CONTINUES TO KILL BY ATTRACTING FISH WHICH THEN STARVE TO DEATH.



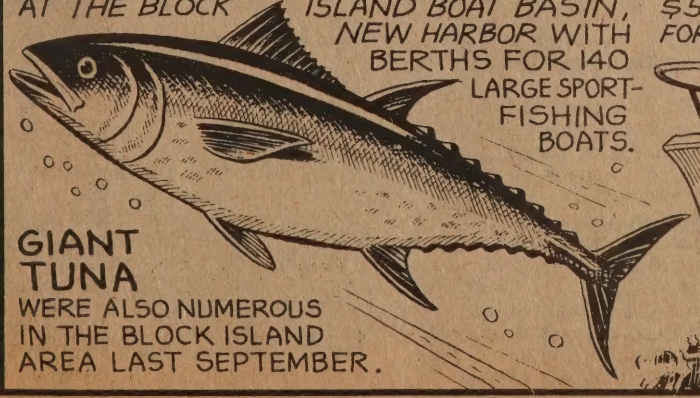
BOTTLE NOSE DOLPHINS IN THEIR EXHIBITION POOLS MUST HAVE AT LEAST 5 FT. OF WATER FOR DIVING AND SPACE FOR 57 FT. CIRCLES BY SEPT. 20, 1982, WARNS THE U.S. DEP'T. OF AGRI-CULTURE.

WILD DOLPHINS — KILLED BY TUNA FISHERMEN MAY NOT EXCEED 20,500 PER YEAR FOR 5 YEARS, A REDUCTION OF 34% FROM THIS PAST YEAR'S LIMIT OF 31,500 TUNA-RELATED DOLPHIN DEATHS.

A 47 LB. SALMON CAUGHT LAST FALL IS A NEW N.Y. STATE RECORD. IT WAS TAKEN ON A *"MILLER SPOON"* BY TOM CASSENTI OF LOCKPORT, N.Y. FISHING LAKE ONTARIO NEAR POINT BREEZE. TOM ALSO WON A CASH AWARD FROM THE *GENESEE N.Y. STATE FRESHWATER FISHING CONTEST.*

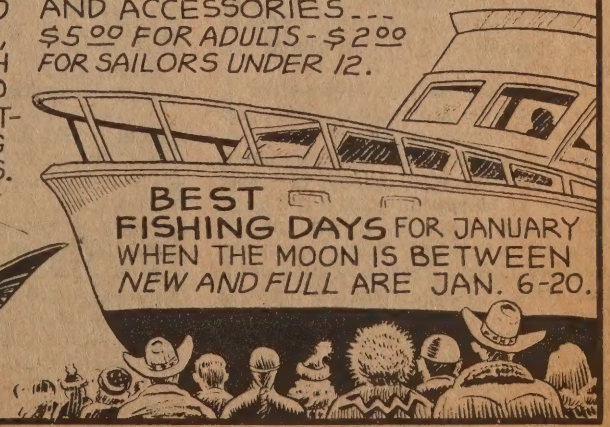
LARGEST LARGEMOUTH BASS IN 48 YRS. 21 LBS. 3 OZ., WAS CAUGHT LAST YEAR IN LAKE CASITAS, CALIF. BY RAY EASLEY. THE ALL TACKLE RECORD OF 22 LBS. 4 OZ. STILL STANDS, BUT EASLEY'S BIG POT BELLIED BATTLER IS A *RECORD FOR 8 LB. TEST LINE.*

THE 1981 U.S. ATLANTIC TUNA TOURNAMENT, SEPT. 15-17, IS MOVING FROM NEW ENGLAND TO BETTER FACILITIES AT BLOCK ISLAND, 12 MILES OFF MONTAUK, L.I. *HEADQUARTERED AT THE BLOCK ISLAND BOAT BASIN, NEW HARBOR* WITH BERTHS FOR 140 LARGE SPORT-FISHING BOATS.



GIANT TUNA WERE ALSO NUMEROUS IN THE BLOCK ISLAND AREA LAST SEPTEMBER.

THE 71ST. NEW YORK NATIONAL BOAT SHOW WILL BE HELD AT THE N.Y. COLISEUM JAN. 17-25. 400 EXHIBITORS WILL HAVE ON VIEW A FLEET OF 525 BOATS AND ACCESSORIES --- *$5.00 FOR ADULTS - $2.00 FOR SAILORS UNDER 12.*



BEST FISHING DAYS FOR JANUARY WHEN THE MOON IS BETWEEN *NEW AND FULL* ARE JAN. 6-20.

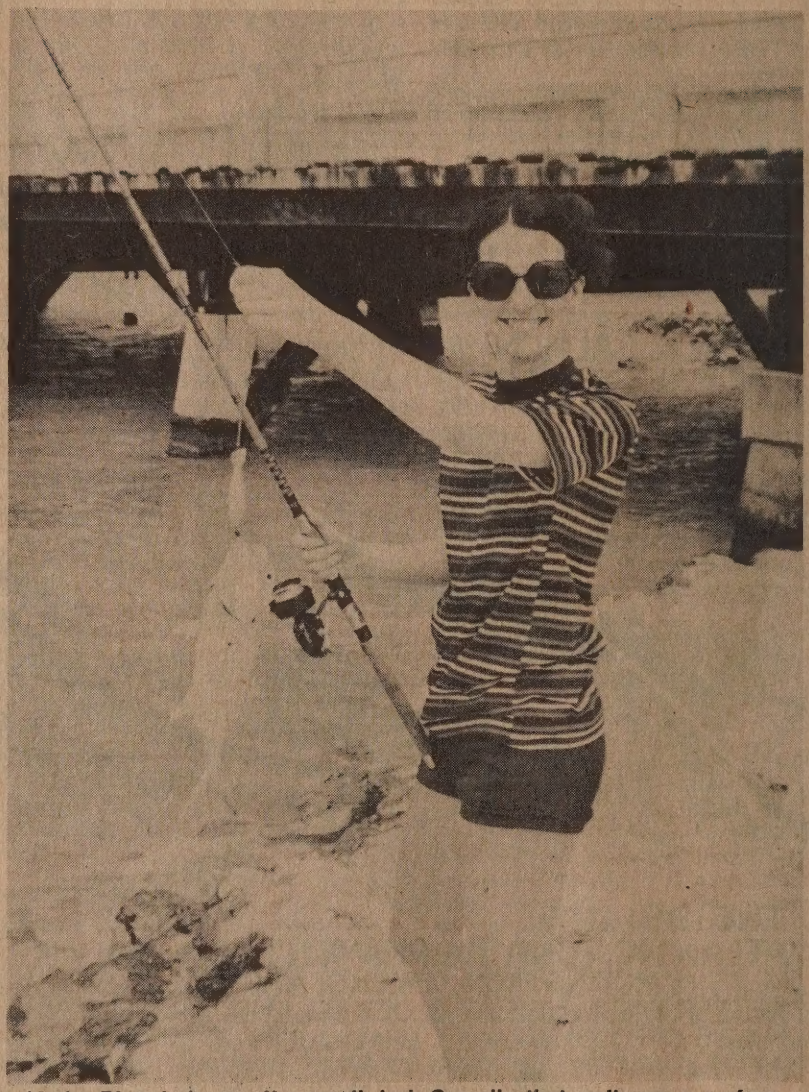
SHOREBOUND IN THE KEYS

by Fred Golofaro

For many anglers, any mention of the Florida Keys evokes images of angling notables such as Curt Gowdy and Ted Williams being poled over crystalline flats by well known guides, seeking out game fish such as tarpon, bonefish and permit with a fly rod. These are the Keys; a la American Sportsman. Many northern anglers are missing out on some potentially super fishing because of the aura created by such an image. Indeed, fishing alone with an experienced flats or back-country guide is costly and requires a certain amount of skill on the angler's part.

For a number of reasons, far and away the greatest attention by visiting anglers is focused on the fleets of charter boats which, for around $300 a day will put a party of six into a variety of species including sailfish, dolphin, blackfin tuna, kingfish, jacks, snappers and barracuda. This type of fishing requires the least amount of skill and is almost guaranteed to put some fish in the box.

For those anglers who thirst to do battle with species such as tarpon, snook and bonefish, there are alternate routes which are sure to keep you well occupied with fine light tackle sport. If the expense of a guide for several days of flats fishing is no obstacle, then by all means, do it. It is a type of fishing that any true fisherman owes to him/or herself to experience at least once. The flats surrounding the Keys are a world unto themselves and the guides and anglers who concentrate their efforts here are the finest in the world. You might want to try squeezing in at least one trip with a guide and then spending the remainder of your stay sampling the shore fishing possibilities. After all, that is what this article is all about.



Kathy Ristori shows off a small Jack Crevalle that walloped a surface plug alongside a Keys bridge.

As far back as I can remember, I had dreamed of tangling with high jumping tarpon, the ghostly bonefish and Mr. Snook. Such dreams, along with the glamorous appeal of these species and a yearning for some good light tackle sport, lured me to Islamorada during a recent December vacation. With finances being what they were, my only chance of hooking up with "the big three" would be by concentrating my efforts from shore. While I make no bones about being a dyed-in-the-wool surfcaster, I would gladly have hired out a guide every day or my week long stint if my budget would have allowed it.

As it turned out, I discovered more action than I had ever bargained for. Islamorada just happens to be surrounded by some of the finest light tackle fishing in the Keys and for anyone willing to do a little reconnoitering, there are plenty of possibilities available to the shorebound angler. Numerous bridges in the area provide the most obvious solution to the shore fisherman's problem. These southern spans are no less a haven for local game fish than are our northern structures.

My introduction to Keys' bridge fishing was as sudden as it was exciting. By the time I had made the two hour drive down from Miami and managed to get unpacked and organized, a nearly full moon had replaced the bright afternoon sun. My first stop at Indian Key Bridge accomplished two of my three intended objectives. Peering down into the shadows from the catwalk situated on the northernmost end of the span, it

(Continued on page 18.)

Former Fisherman editor Don Miller prepares to release a highly prized bonefish.

This Florida lass was on hand when a school of jacks erupted in the placid confines of a Keys marina.

Note the catwalk that borders this Keys bridge. Recreational fishing is promoted throughout Florida and there are few problems with access.

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took me only a matter of seconds to realize that the torpedo-like shadows lined up below me belonged to snook and very big snook at that. After whipping only one fish out of ten and putting a decent dent in my lure supply, I headed over to the catwalk situated on the down-tide and southerly end of the bridge where I figured my chances of staying hooked up would improve. Well, the tarpon I found rolling all over the surface here were even more formidable foes than the snook—many of which were in the twenty pound class—had proven to be. While most of the tarpon were in the forty to sixty pound class, I managed to tangle with quite a few in the one hundred pound range over the next five nights. The sight of huge tarpon suspended in slow motion leaps, silhouetted against a moonlit surface will be with me forever.

The wild action was repeated each night and what thoroughly amazed me was that I had the bridges to myself each night I was there.

Within twenty-four hours of my arrival, I established a pattern of working the bridges at night and after a break for some sleep, spending the better part of midday wading nearby flats for bonefish, but having barracuda up to ten pounds occupy most of my time. I didn't mind the barracuda a bit as they struck rapidly-retrieved jigs and tube lures with abandon and were fine sport on light spinning tackle.

One morning, a stop by an Indian Key marina was well timed with the arrival of a school of jack crevalle in the five to ten pound range. The jacks had cornered schools of helpless baitfish amidst the docked boats and for over an hour provided frenzied action that left me with throbbing wrists. While we are on the subject, let me say this about the jack crevalle. The best way to describe their fighting ability is to compare them to our bluefish—and there is no comparison. The blue is anemic compared to these powerhouses—unless I was so worn out by all of the nighttime action on the bridges that I was deceived. I soon discovered that the many channels leading to bridges were a good source of sport with the jacks.

Apparently the trip turned out to be a tremendous success in every respect. I literally fished myself to death and enjoyed fine action every step of the way.

If you feel like you want to give the shorebound approach a try, here are some tips which I hope will make your trip as rewarding as mine was.

For bridge fishing, you'll want an outgoing tide, which means the water is emptying from the Gulf side into the Atlantic. If you concentrate your efforts on the spans labeled Indian Key, Channel Two, and Channel Five, you can't go wrong. The best bridge fishing is at night, so plan on making several after dark forays.

During the day, you should focus your attention on the flats bordering the ocean side of Lower Matecumbe if bonefish are your quarry. The same fine water being worked by local guides is available to you here and parking is no problem. Fish it near low water since the only chance a wading angler has to find bonefish are when they are "tailing." A good pair of Polaroid sunglasses and a long-billed cap are a must when working the flats. Also bring along a pair of sneakers for protection while wading.

Another area worth checking out for wading is along the sea wall which parallels Route One just north of Bud and Mary's in Islamorada. Barracuda swarmed all over these flats and could always be counted on for action. When fishing artificials for "cuda," reel as fast as you can and then reel a little faster. They like jigs and tubes really movin' and won't even look at a slow moving lure.

I believe your selection of rods can be limited to two outfits. One, a fairly light spinning rod of about six-and-a-half feet in length and equipped with a good quality spinning reel capable of holding 200 yds. of eight pound test mono will work out fine for wading the flats.

Your second outfit can be either spinning or baitcasting; I prefer the latter. The rod should have enough backbone to flip plugs up to two ounces and set hooks into the steel-like mouths of big tarpon. Don't expect to land many, if any, tarpon. If you hang on long enough to get four or five jumps out of him, you're doing good. All tarpon, and bonefish as well, are released unless being kept for a mount. Should you want to land a tarpon or snook from a bridge, you can walk the fish to shore or carry a bridge gaff along with you.

Getting back to your second outfit, keep the rod under seven feet in length and mount it with a reel filled with twelve or fifteen pound monofilament. Reels comparable in size to the Penn 710 or the Ambassadeur 6000 will do nicely here.

As for tackle, by all means bring a supply of the same lures used up north for weaks, blues, and stripers. Mirro-lures were dynamite on the tarpon, while snook struck one ounce yellow bucktails with reckless abandon. Include some darting type plugs as well as some sinking Rebels or Rapalas. Tube lures with swimming heads are a sure bet for barracuda as are small white bucktails. Jacks found the white leadheads equally appealing. Tote along some rubber-bodied shrimp lures as well and you should be in good shape in the tackle department. Any other tackle needs, such as the shallow running, flat-headed bonefish jigs, can be met by any one of several fine tackle shops in the area.

If you have about had it with snow and cold, there's no better tonic than a week of light tackle action in the Florida Keys. By taking the shore-bound route, you can do it without spending a fortune. And you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that "you did it your way."

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Time For A Break

by Al Ristori

It's a long, cold winter we have to live with in this area and, unless you're one of the minority who braves the icy blasts to seek cod or whiting, it's been awhile since you last picked up a rod. With nothing too exciting coming up in the near future, this is a good time to think about getting away from it all—and trying something completely different.

Surprisingly, there aren't too many places (even in the tropics) where mid-winter fishing is really that good. However, almost every such locale has good fishing to offer in March and April. Before getting into overseas possibilities, let's look at what Florida has to offer.

An easy two-day drive on the Interstate will put you into some fine fishing opportunities this spring. While all of Florida will start coming alive in March and April, the best fishing opportunities will continue to be concentrated in the southeastern portion of the state. An exception to that rule is the freshwater bass fishing in the northern and central areas. Florida bass are on their spawning beds at this time and sharp guides can take you right to a ten pounder. Of course, they won't always hit, but you'll never have a better opportunity to nail a bass of that size in the U.S.

Saltwater fishermen should concentrate on the area south of Cape Canaveral. The best of the offshore sail and king runs usually occur in December and January, but there's often some good early spring action also. A few dolphin and wahoo may be around offshore, but that fishing will improve sharply in May. Look for an earlier shot at dolphin in the Keys. A wide variety of fish are available in the inshore waters along the southeast coast. Even when you're blown out offshore (a frequent occurrence in winter and early spring), you can have a lot of fun using light tackle for sea trout, snook, pompano, bluefish, Spanish mackerel, blue runners, jack crevalle, grunts, snappers, sheepshead and a host of other colorful species. This fishing can be done both from boat and shore, and day and night. Bucktail or nylon jigs will catch an amazing variety of fish in Florida, and many baits will also do the job. One windy day last March I fished with some local experts in Lake Worth and caught ten species of fish on sand fleas that had been raked off the nearby beaches that morning. An eleventh species (bluefish) was added by using pieces of fish caught on the sand fleas.

If you want to get an early start on the bluefish season, the inlet at Fort Pierce is a good spot to check out. The blues are mostly two to four pounds, but there are lots of them; and they're thickest during cold snaps, when other species stop biting. Quite a few redfish (channel bass) are jigged in this inlet, and snook can be taken at night. Each spring there is a large, though spotty, run of huge bluefish offshore along the southeast coast. The blues may show first off the Keys in March, but are almost always located in the area between Miami and Stuart by mid-April. As the fish are always moving, it's a boom or bust operation—with no guarantees from day to day. Both party and charter boats will chase them when they're available.

Some of the best Florida fishing at this time will occur in the Keys. The flats will come alive as waters warm and there should be a definite improvement in fishing for bonefish, permit and barracuda. Best of all, the spring tarpon run will start. Key West will provide the best fishing at first, but by April there should be action throughout the Keys. The fishing is even more consistent as the weather settles down in May and June. By that time tarpon will also be distributed well up both East and West Coasts, with particular concentrations in the Boca Grande area near St. Petersbug. The biggest tarpon of all (some in the 150 to 200 lb. class) seem to concentrate in the shallow waters off Hommasassa in May.

Though tarpon are available in many places all year round, the migratory fish are particularly large—often running well over one hundred pounds. They are caught in a variety of ways, with the most common being casting to cruising fish on the flats and fishing live mullet around the bridges. Guides are advisable for this fishing and they can be booked at many points in the Keys, particularly Islamorada and Marathon. Among those I've fished with personally and highly recommend are Rick Ruoff and Vic Gaspeny at Bud and Mary's (305-664-2461) in Islamorada, and Cal Cochran (305-743-6875) in Marathon. Fly rodders do particularly well with the spooky fish on the flats and all of these guides are experts at that type of fishing. One of the most consistent producers of tarpon in the Keys is Captain Bob West (305-296-2887), who trolls at night in Key West Harbor.

If it's tarpon you want, but you can't afford to pay charter fees, there's no need to give up the attempt. You can find all the tarpon

you want around the Keys bridges at night. The ebb tide is best (when the current runs from the Gulf side to the ocean), as shrimp and small fish are swept around the pilings and the tarpon are waiting for them. You can literally "look" for these fish on the up-tide side of the bridges—or listen for the splashes as they feed. In some cases, there are catwalks on the bridges from which you can cast, but all of the good bridges can also be fished from the sides. Bucktail jigs work well on these fish and will also produce a few snook. Plugs will also do the job, with the 52M Mirrolure a particular favorite. Generally, tarpon caught close to the sides of the bridges aren't large (ten to forty pounds), but they're a real challenge on reasonably light tackle. Best of all, this fishing won't cost you a thing other than the fuel necessary to drive from bridge to bridge looking for the fish.

If family considerations dictate that you have to stay in the Miami/Fort Lauderdale area, you still have a good shot at tarpon during the early part of the season. Tarpon of all sizes show up at Government Cut in March and provide Miami area anglers with some wild action. The best fishing usually occurs around daylight and the Burke Wig Wag Minno is a real killer on these fish. One of the top guides in this area is Captain Lee Baker (305-446-0107). Lee also guides for bonefish and permit on the Biscayne Bay flats, a remarkably productive area within sight of the Miami skyline.

Another good bet for metropolitan tarpon is to charter Captain Bill Mann in Fort Lauderdale (2121 S. 38th Ave., phone 305-583-5395). Bill fishes within minutes of his dock and is assured of a year-round supply of tarpon by a power plant canal in the area. This is daytime fishing and fish are hooked with good consistency.

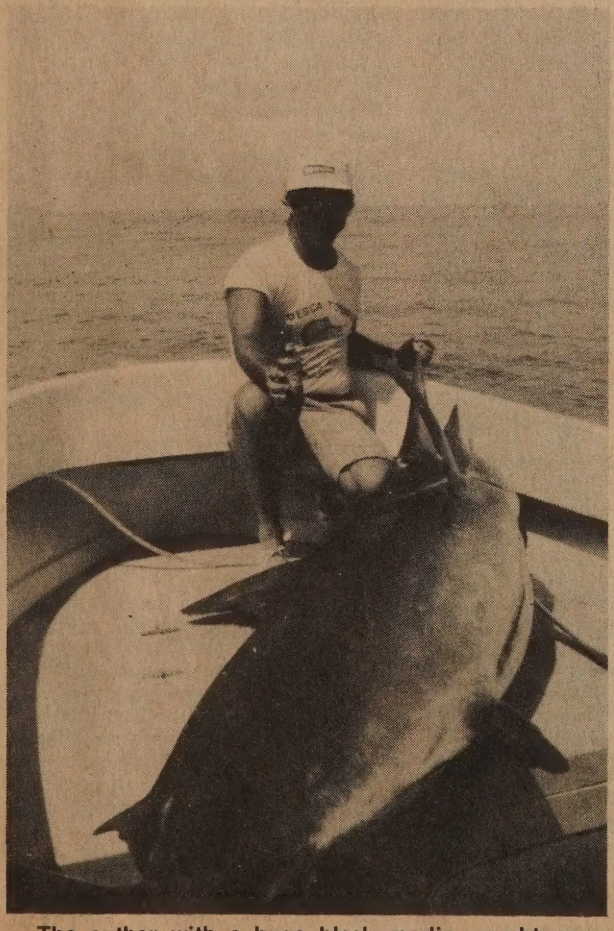
Party boat fans can find plenty of action in Florida at this time, and often on boats where they'll see a lot of familiar faces. In a previous issue I wrote of my experiences on the Dry Tortugas trips that the "Viking Starship" makes out of Key West. On my first trip I found myself fishing between former Montauk tackleman Johnny Kronuch and Al Colban, mate on the Captree "Capt. Gillen." The two day trips to this relatively virgin area are a real adventure, as you never know what you might come up with. Something new last year was fishing in deeper water for red snappers.

You'll also find a lot of familiar faces in Islamorada, where I suspect there are more refugees from New York and New Jersey than natives! Walking around town you may bump into such famous anglers as Al Urban, Jiggs Silber and Hy Vogel. Jump aboard the party boat "Capt. Jack" and you'll be skippered by Freeport native Jackie McGuire. Jackie has a good deal on his boat: live bait. He used to spend part of the fishing day trying to net the bait, but now has a small boat that gathers it up before sailing time. In Florida reef fishing, live bait can make all the difference when things are tough.

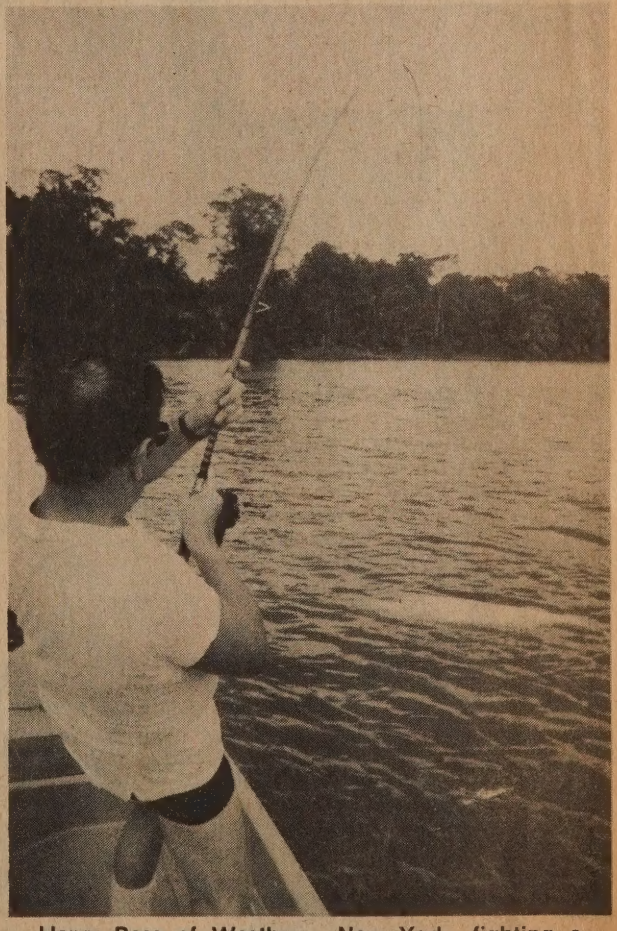
If you've had your fill of saltwater fishing, try some of the fine freshwater sport in that inland sea, Lake Okeechobee. This huge shallow lake is loaded with largemouth bass, and also provides excellent panfishing. Baitcasting gear is the best bet for casting worms and Johnson Silver Minnow spoons into the pepper grass and hauling out those big bass before they hang you up. A good spot for renting boats or obtaining very inexpensive guiding services is Jolly Roger Marina, P.O. Box 854, Clewiston 33440 (813-983-7402).

A word to the wise: make reservations in advance before going to Florida at this time. Things ease up a little in April and rates even come down in some cases. However, that doesn't necessarily apply to guides, who are frequently busier once the

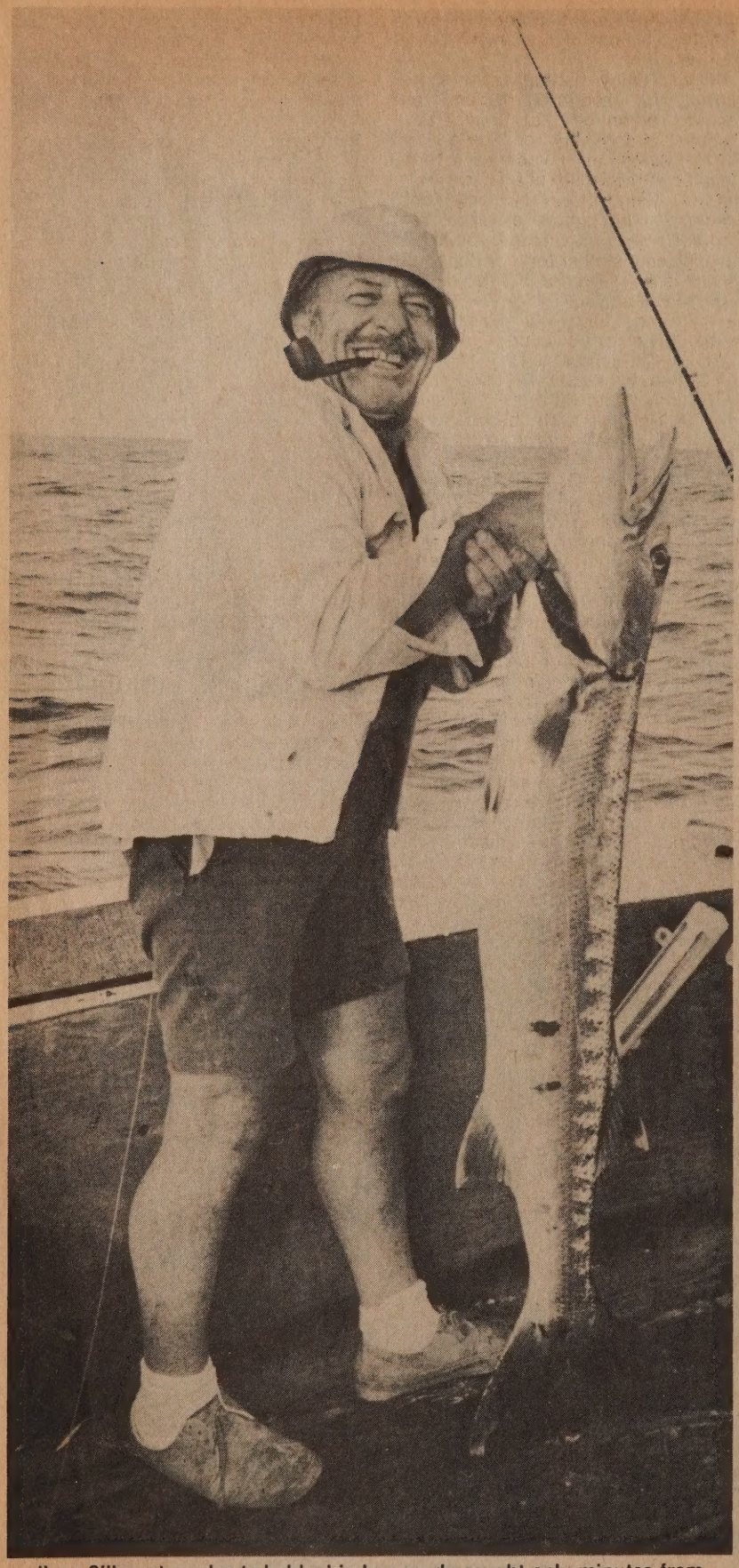
(Continued on next page.)



The author with a huge black marlin caught on Hannibal Bank of Club Pacifico.



Harry Ross of Westbury, New York, fighting a tarpon at Parismina Tarpon Rancho.



Jiggs Silber struggles to hold a big barracuda caught only minutes from his slip at Bud & Mary's in Islamorada.

fishing winds into high gear.

If you're ready for something more exotic than Florida, there are a number of good choices. For those who prefer small game, it's hard to beat Club Pacifico de Panama. Indeed, I've never fished any area that's produced fish as consistently. It's quite true that you may strike out on black marlin or even sailfish in any given week, but the inshore species are always there and usually hungry! This really isn't the ideal place for light tackle, as the fish are just too big and mean. On the other hand, the angler who gets his biggest kicks out of casting a popping plug for jumbo stripers and blues will find himself in seventh heaven at Club Pacifico.

The camp is located on the large offshore island called Coiba—itself a great fish trap. However, there are also many other offshore islands in the vicinity which provide even more opportunities. It would take years just to make one cast at every likely rock and reef formation—though I'd sure like the opportunity to try doing it! Several of the shallow reefs are particularly outstanding. It's not unusual to cast a popping plug over these reefs and watch dozens of fish suddenly appear to chase it. Most impressive of the lot is the cubera snapper, a real plug crusher who will break you off in the rocks before you can shout "Did you see that!" Averaging twenty-five to fifty pounds (and growing a lot bigger), they make surfcasting tackle seem like ultra-light. Other species that will hit plugs inshore include mullet snappers, amberjack, cobalt jacks, jack crevalle, horse-eye jacks, roosterfish, sharks, houndfish, rainbow runners and even sailfish. The latter isn't just speculation. Ed Graser, owner of the Outdoorsman in Fort Lee, N.J., saw a sailfish (in the one hundred pound class) swim by as we were plugging a shallow reef on our last trip. Ed flipped a Striper Swiper over to it and the sail jumped right on the plug. Unfortunately, the hooks didn't set and the plug pulled out when the sail headed toward the boat.

Further offshore there's a spot called Hannibal Bank that produces great numbers of black marlin and sailfish during the season. In addition, the reef is often alive with surfacing dolphin, rainbow runners and mullet snappers. Huge cuberas and amberjack lurk in the depths, and you can deep jig all the silk snappers you want—until the sharks show up.

In terms of consistently excellent fishing, there isn't any place I know of that can compare with Club Pacifico. What's more, the winter weather is near perfect. Normally it's calm and cloudless! Fishing is done from inboard diesel-powered Mako 23s, which make great casting platforms and are quite adequate for big game fishing. Unfortunately, this club isn't cheap, though summer rates are lower—and the inshore fishing is even better at that time. For more info contact camp owner Bob Griffin

(800-327-5662) or Jim Chapralis, Pan Angling Travel Service, 180 North Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois 60601 (312-263-0328).

We're just now rolling into prime time for Costa Rican tarpon fishing. By early May the camps will be closing for the rainy season, and won't reopen until a lull in the wet season in late summer. The river tarpon fishing can be great at times, and heavy tackle isn't required. However, it isn't very consistent, and can be spoiled by heavy rains in the mountains that turn the rivers brown. Huge schools of tarpon are always available just outside the river mouths, but the bars are usually too rough to permit fishing out there. I've fished Parismina Tarpon Rancho many times, and the most exciting sport I've had there was early morning casting for tarpon right from shore at the river mouth. This unique fishing in the jungle is a great adventure and I highly recommend it.

For the big game fisherman, there are several good choices. Tropic Star Lodge in Panama is hard to beat for black marlin if you've got the wherewithal to make the trip. Dr. Gary Sherman, of Brooklyn, was there in 1979 and was well satisfied with the number of black marlin and sailfish hook-ups—but happiest with a day of wild bull dolphin fishing, and proudest of a thirty pound snook he caught casting a Pencil Popper across a river mouth! With the Japanese longliners eliminated from the area, Baja California has come back in the last couple of years, and once again offers outstanding striped marlin fishing—as well as swordfish, sailfish, roosterfish and many other species. The best fishing is just starting at Cabo San Lucas, and Rancho Buena Vista should be hot during the spring. Salinas, Ecuador was once the greatest spot of all for striped marlin, but the longliners have done a job there. However, I have had word of some improvement in that situation and there is hope of a return to former glories.

If you enjoy fishing from shore, don't mind roughing it and are looking for an off-beat, inexpensive foreign fishing vacation—give John Eoff's camp in Honduras a try. Located at the mouth of a jungle river, John's camp offers few amenities. However, the cabins are cool and comfortable; and the snook and tarpon come almost to your doorstep. There is no need for a boat as you simply pick up your rod whenever you care to and walk a few yards to the beach. Snook can be caught with light tackle on the bars during the day; while heavier tackle is called for at night when big tarpon and snook move in right along the beach. At $50 a day it's a real adventure for those who want good shore fishing without the frills. Les Gay at Sportsmen Tours, P.O. Box 570712, Miami, Florida 33157 (305-253-4391) can make all arrangements. April is a peak month, and the full moon period is a good bet, as the best fishing is at night.

A good possibility closer to home is Kingston Bight Lodge on Little Cayman in the Caribbean. It's not hard to get to this camp via Cayman Airways from Miami, and the cost of a pleasant fishing vacation in protected waters is relatively low. For instance, room and board is only $74 a day double and a day of guided bonefishing is $75. Bonefish are caught within minutes of the camp and are chummed to the boat—making this easy fishing for those who have a hard time spotting the fish. There are also landlocked tarpon in a nearby lake and some fine wahoo trolling at the dropoff (also just minutes from the camp). The inshore fishing is good year-round, but the wahoo are at their peak in March and April. The camp isn't fancy, but it is comfortable and quite suitable for wives and families. Les Gay can also make reservations for this fine operation.

Moving even closer to home, there is fine fishing to be had at this time in the Bahamas. Actually, March and April provide only the beginning of the best billfishing in the Bahamas. May, June and July are normally better months for blue and white marlin, though you're liable to get lucky at any time. The reef and flats fishing is always good, unless a cold front from the north sweeps in during your stay. For all around fishing, Walker's Cay is hard to beat. Though the offshore fishing can be spotty, there are loads of barracuda inshore and miles of the finest reefs in the Bahamas. If you enjoy deep jigging, you'll never want to leave those productive reefs. There are some big bonefish in the area, but not the quantities found in other parts of the Bahamas. The accommodations on the island are first class and you won't encounter any of the negative outlook from the natives that is so common in the cities. For information, contact Walker's Cay Hotel & Marina, 700 S.W. 34th St., Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33315 (800-327-1791).

Another good bet in the Bahamas is the formerly private Chub Cay Club. The best billfishing in the Bahamas is found in this area and there are also miles of beautiful flats that provide many bonefish and permit. The reefs aren't as extensive as at Walker's, but I've still done very well with groupers, amberjack and kingfish—not to mention the always abundant barracuda. For information contact Chub Cay Club, 216 Palermo Ave., Coral Gables, Florida 33134 (305-445-7830).

If you get a chance to break away for a special trip, here's hoping that the information provided here will prove helpful. More detailed articles on some of these areas will follow in the next several weeks.

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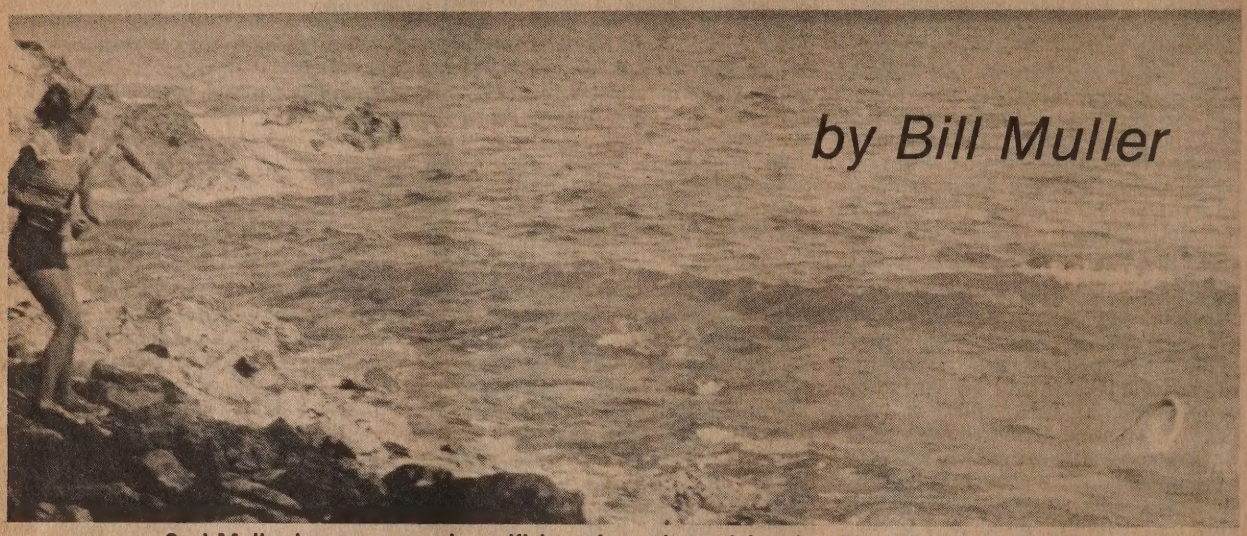
LARGER MODELS ALSO AVAILABLE

ST. LUCIAN ESCAPE

by Bill Muller



Suzi Muller hangs on as a houndfish performs its aerial antics. Photo by W. A. Muller.

Take a jet plane south and when you get to the southern tip of Florida, veer to the right and sit back. You are heading to a small island in the Caribbean called St. Lucia. Barely twenty-seven miles long and fourteen miles wide, this jewel of an island nestled between Martinique, Barbados, and Trinidad is as varied in geologic design as many continents.

Unless you arrive by way of a small prop-driven aircraft, your jet will land at Hewanorra Airport in the southern tip of the island. That's an advantage and a disadvantage at the same time, since most of the resorts are located from the central west coast of the island to its northern tip. It's an advantage because your car trip to the hotel will expose you to much of the island's countryside and you will quickly develop an appreciation for the island's many terrains, as well as something of an understanding of the people who, as is true on so many of the West Indian islands, are poor or near-poor and live under conditions that in America can only be called squalor. If you can ignore the rundown shanties, the patchwork clothes, and the dirty children with distended bellies, you'll enjoy your stay much more. That may seem like a cruel report, but in the final analysis it is beyond our ability to change these conditions. St. Lucia, like so many of the West Indian islands, is, or was, part of the British Commonwealth. Slowly, but surely, Great Britain has been turning over control of the islands to the natives under heavy pressure from many quarters—not the least of which has been the United Nations and Cuba. True, the British did have a real opportunity to develop these nations and true, they did institute formal education and they did train many natives in basic skills concomitant to the tourist industry, but they didn't take things as far along as they could have. They settled for second best, it would appear, and the result has been that few of the natives profit from tourism and other export products. These comments are not intended as editorial criticism of Great Britain and her policies, but rather are needed in order for any tourist to understand what is so obvious in the valleys, streets, cities, and towns all through the West Indies.

When the Island received its independence from Great Britain in the early days of 1979, there were outbursts of violence that preceded the change of ownership as local and foreign wheeler-dealers jockeyed for position in the new government. Among the people, there were many moods. Some were clearly optimistic, some were clearly pessimistic, while still others held to a wait-and-see policy. Many natives are clearly hostile to whites in the West Indies because they see whites as responsible for their own lack of progress and as the controllers of wealth.

Well, enough about politics! I believe that you get the picture. It is important to understand what you will see and have to contend with when on a foreign vacation. Incidentally, the discussion above should not be taken as an attempt to discourage you from a St. Lucian vacation—quite the contrary. However, know where you're going, know how people there will feel about you, know what you can do and what you shouldn't so that things go smoothly. For example, don't take a photo of a native of St. Lucia unless you first ask permission. It is apparently a half-religious and half-business policy. I wish someone had told me, since otherwise a writer/photographer on a working vacation can get into a lot of trouble and insult the people who have extended their hospitality. It's wise to be an intelligent and sensitive American in the Caribbean rather than an ugly one!

As we were saying before the political detour: you have now taken the car trip of about an hour or an hour-and-a-half, from the airport to one of the many hotels along the northwest coast. You could have also elected to stay closer to the airport, but then, if you plan a little fishing that would appear to be the wrong place to stay. The car ride is an experience in itself. There are few cars and thus most drivers really whiz about and as they approach any of the numerous hair-pin turns that take you up, down, and around the mountains, you can't help but feel that they are somehow not in control. Still, they drive these roads everyday and there are few accidents.

The air temperature and gentle breeze are both almost constant. Daily highs range from the mid-seventies to the low eighties with

nighttime temps in the mid-sixties. It was only slightly humid on one day; otherwise, it was warm and pleasantly dry day after day. Of course, there is the usual ten minute shower everyday or every other day; but this is just enough to encourage the palm trees to stay green and supple and to maintain the tropical flowers that have been cultured around the resorts.

In places, the coastline is rugged while elsewhere there are gorgeous sand beaches. The sea on the east coast seems to be a little more active which is why, we guess, most of the resorts are on the west coast. We did see some spots along the east coast that looked fishy, but somehow what with relaxing, sightseeing, and fishing near the hotel, we never did manage to try them. We also visited some harbors, like the one north of the Town of Soufriere (Marigot Bay), where the movie "Dr. Doolittle" was filmed. This was a deep water, snug-type harbor in which tarpon and snook were often visitors in-season.

The rain forest is a surprise and a cool retreat during the heat of day. Here, you can see coffee trees, plantain (a type of wild banana that shouldn't be eaten raw), nut trees, and ferns of unimaginable lushness and diversity. As you exit the rain forest to the south on the west coast you see the Piton twin mountain peaks thrusting up out of the lush green backdrop. The gentle blue-green waves of the ocean complete the picture. We had to stop on the side of the mountain and snap a few photos before moving on since the image through the lens was the essence of tropical West Indian beauty.

Everything about the West Indies is just a little more colorful than elsewhere. Perhaps it is the attempts of the people to live up to the beauty of the physical surroundings that nature has provided and thus somehow avoid total anonymity. Unlike the stark and dark fishing boats found in northern climates, each fisherman puts to sea each day in a small dory-type vessel that is typically bright green or blue with flourishes of yellow and red usually affixed to the stern and bow in some design. The same is true of the clothes. Bright and flashy prints, deep tones of red, yellow, blue, and green. Yes, rich and deep characterizes the colors very well.

The variety of the small island doesn't end there. There is also a volcano with steam—spitting sulfur pits, and vast banana plantations in the valleys.

Once we had settled down and absorbed a little sun, we naturally began thinking of places to fish. Also naturally, since we were strangers in the land we asked about where to fish. Typically, the natives aren't really into fishing. Even the fishermen go about the daily tasks of setting their nets with a certain distraction and disinterest in the fish themselves. We discovered that everybody loved to eat fish, but few had enough interest in them to get up early or buy a rod and reel. There were, of course, a few local captains who chartered for big game, but we weren't interested in marlin or tuna—we never are. We came with the idea of finding out if the average fisherman on a winter vacation could find enough fish inshore to pass a few hours. So our questions were greeted in the usual way. "Sure man, you can go to Soufriere and get a boat for $200 a day. They take you out far to where the big fishes are." We explained that we wanted to fish from shore and didn't care how big the fish were. That remark brought smiles and mumbles that clearly reflected their conviction in our insanity.

I'm usually not turned off by this reaction since I know from past experience that the natives of most of the islands do not fully appreciate the fishing potential that is right under their noses. However, this time I was a little deterred. However, it was Sue, bless her, who prodded me into giving the fishing a try near to the hotel. Maybe it was the enjoyment of my total lethargy that made me procrastinate, but whatever the reason, she motivated me.

So, one morning after breakfast we trotted to the west where the sand beach met a rock pile that looked very fishy. In addition, the curve of the beach ended in a point of rocky land and the waves created swirling currents as they broke over the point. If there were any baitfish around, that turbulence would be an ideal place for a predator to ambush them. I was more intent upon taking photos than fishing and it was a good thing, too; since had I not been snapping shots all over the place I would not have been in position to take a photo of Suzi striking back at a houndfish that hit her on about the fifth or sixth cast and then began the usual surface frolics that are so typical of the species. That fish took her by surprise and since she had never caught one before, she was quite surprised at its fighting tactics.

Well, that did it! Fueled by the excitement of catching the fish, my wife began throwing her RedFin out as far as she could and giving much more care to the task of the retrieve. She was hooked on these tropical animals it was obvious. I, too, dabbled a bit since the fish seemed very cooperative. We also became curious about other spots close to the hotel. So we tried them and each location produced fish. Finally, we decided to try a rather elaborate pier that had at one time been used for docking large private vessels. A hurricane had apparently taken off the end of the thing and it wasn't economically practical to repair it since few ships now wished to take advantage of the facility. Nowadays, most folks came in by plane and those that came in via cruise ships were easily ferried to shore at the main harbor and then transported by car to various places of interest. However, the broken end of that pier put us

(Continued on next page.)

Author works on an unseen battler amid the splendor of St. Lucia's shore line. Photo by W. A. Muller.

Small but scrappy jacks provide fine light tackle sport for the visiting angler. Photo by W. A. Muller.

close to the outer edge of a cluster of coral heads and that meant good fishing. We first tried it in the hot afternoon sun and with some success. In fact, considering conditions, our success was so noteworthy that we decided to get up early and try it at dawn.

To give you an idea of how varied the fish can be around such an island even in the so-called off season, we caught a small jack crevalle; caught a rainbow jack; caught a lizard fish; were hit several times by houndfish, and were followed by several barracuda that had to weigh close to thirty pounds apiece. That was an hour's worth of action. Since we were fishing within plain sight of most of the hotel's workers and guests, our success sparked a great deal of interest. Within minutes of the first fish, youngsters flocked around us. They all wanted the fish to eat and several went charging off to get handlines from home so that they could join the fun. When they returned, they brought bait which just wasn't a successful fish taker. We showed them our tube lures and swimming plugs and even gave them a few to try. They were unimpressed with the lures after using them, but before the first cast marveled at their construction and action. We explained that they could catch more fish if they would return with the lures at dawn or dusk and retrieve them very fast. They smiled and said that they certainly would try it. We never saw them again!

A number of the guests brought out fishing rods and tried fishing, but most did not understand the relationships of fast fish, clear water, and artificial lures. Many times they would retrieve slowly and this kind of action wouldn't even tempt a little interest out of the fish. We tried to explain, but northern and European habits die slowly. Oh yes, incidentally, there were quite a few Europeans on the island, vacationing as we were. We met French (there were many French), West Germans, English, and also many Canadians.

Once again we had proven that it is possible to catch fish from the shore in a foreign land without the help of a professional guide or a forty foot vessel. Look, we didn't knock 'em dead and we didn't catch enough fish to go into business, but we did have fun and that's why one goes to a tropic isle after all, isn't it? We caught a half-dozen species and the action was brisk enough to keep us coming back for more.

Do you want to go to St. Lucia? Save your money since it isn't cheap—but then few, if any, southern vacations in winter are inexpensive. It is best to work through a travel agent since they can provide you with up-to-the-minute information on costs, facilities, and bookings. They can also arrange package deals that are a lot less expensive than if you make your own arrangements by the day. What will it cost? Well, to begin with you'll need a plane or a cruise ship. The plane will cost between $324 and $372 per person round trip depending upon the days you wish to travel. Only BWIA flies direct to St. Lucia without transfers. The air fare will also be a lot less expensive if it is arranged as part of a package plan: $243-$292. The cruise ship route will be more leisurely, but you'll have less time on the island—usually anywhere from a few hours to a day or two depending upon which cruise you book. Ships leave from New York, but you can also fly to Florida or Puerto Rico, pick up the boat, and continue on through the West Indies. You had better figure that any kind of a decent cruise will run about $1000 per person. You can get away for less money if you don't want to spend much time on the island and if you aren't really interested in doing some fishing.

Hotel accommodations will cost about $65 to $100 per day double occupancy and most will include either breakfast and dinner, or just dinner. The American plan will provide breakfast as well as dinner. Thus, a trip of five days and four nights would cost about $300 per person double occupancy on average. There will be some hotels that are more expensive and some that are less expensive. Thus, without a package plan arrangement your five day vacation will cost you about fifteen hundred dollars per couple. Throw in a few lunches (about $10 each), a $10 to $30 cab drive from and to the island airport, a $10 departure tax, $5 green fees on golf courses, $12 an hour boat rental for cruising or water skiing, $5 to $7 a day for snorkeling, $50 for a half-day of sightseeing in a private car, and assorted shopping and you can see that it isn't hard to run up a tab for $1600 to $2000 per couple.

How does that compare to a package plan? Of course, you'll make out much better since you'll be scheduled into a charter. You will most likely be able to arrange an eight day, seven night trip including air fare, double occupancy, plus a few goodies thrown in for up to one-third less in overall costs. However, there are disadvantages. You'll have to stay a set number of days (usually eight, ten, twelve, or fourteen), you'll have to take whatever flight is available for that package, and in order to take maximum advantage of the deal you'll have to go along with the goodies even if they do not interest you.

St. Lucia isn't around the corner, so it isn't like a trip to Florida. The flight will take over three hours because you'll wind up not too far from South America. Thus cost is a factor. Nonetheless, the place is beautiful: it is lush rain forest, valley plantation, scenic harbors, busy crowded native cities, green and warm, and a place where a guy and his gal can swim, water ski, fish, lounge around, and enjoy yourself. You want a different Caribbean vacation? Try St. Lucia.

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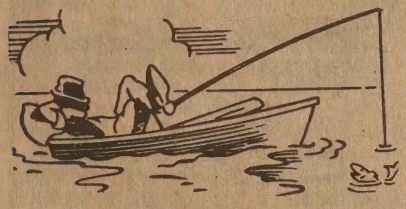
COD

Capt Paul Forsberg of the **Viking Star** which is sailing for cod Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays says that the fishing is decent with fares averging 5 to 6 cod a man. Pool fish are usually in the 20s or 30s. Paul is fishing south of Block Island. Four to 10 lb. pollack and blacks from 3 to 6 lbs. are mixed in, affording customers a good winter mixed bag. Capt Paul Forsberg, Sr. who is running the **Viking Starship** out of Key West, Florida to the tortogas banks has been having red hot fishing on the big reef species. If you plan a trip south soon, see the **Viking** ad on the Montauk page and book a spot.

Captain Richie Rade of the **Marlin Fleet** said that while no one sailed over the weekend there was a noticeable improvement in the cod fishing during the week. On two weekday trips, fares averaged 7 to 8 fish per man in the 7 to 8 lb. range, along with a few up to 40 lbs. Fishing was done at Block Island and inshore of Cartwright and a few blackfish and pollack are mixed with the cod. Richie added that the **Marlin IV** will continue to sail whenever weather permits.



GREAT SOUTH BAY
★ BEST BET ★
COD

CAPTREE

Captain Speedy Hubert of the **Speedy Fleet** reported that the **Speedy VI** was able to sail on Saturday and did well with cod ranging from 12 to 40 lbs. The skipper said that whenever weather permits sailing, the boat has returned with catches of 20 fish and up. The skipper says that the boat will sail as long as the weather permits and there are customers on the dock.

WEST END SOUTH SHORE
★ BEST BET ★
COD

FREEPORT

Capt Richie Kessinger of the **Starstream II** tells us that he's had some good days codfishing. On one trip in particular, last week, 110 cod were caught. Fifteen of these fish were over 30 lbs. Several fish over 50 lbs. were brought up. On Saturday's trip 36 cod were caught up to 40 lbs. for 20 fares. Richie says the action is about 18 miles SE of Jone's Inlet. Mr. C. Camigliario of Wantagh bagged a 40 pounder. Freeport angler M. Kalland had a 36 lb. cod while Ed Lowe of Bay Shore bagged a 34 pounder. Richie says the smallest cod were 10 to 12 pounders and that there are lots of jumbo fish around.

Capt Al Lindroth of the **Capt Al** reports very good codfishing Saturday with fish going up to 48 lbs. Earlier in the week on Monday and Tuesday decent catches of cod were made at every drop. One customer finished the day up with 7 fish all by himself. Al says there are a lot of fish around and the sizes are very good. These are new fish in the area. Al is also working roughly 18 miles south of Jone's Inlet. He says most of the fish are big. He also says that due to the moon coming up next week, these fish might very well move in close to Cholera. The key word remains consistency on the local codfishing, and decent weather usually equates to a solid catch of cod.

Capt Wayne King of the Montauk charterboat **King Wayne** fished out of Freeport Saturday, as he brought the boat back to this area for some sprucing up and a new coat of paint. His charter Saturday for 17 men fishing SE of Jone's resulted in a catch of 34 cod up to 44 lbs. Three fish were in the 40s, five were in the 30s and the remainder went between 8 and 26 lbs. Wayne himself hung a double-header.

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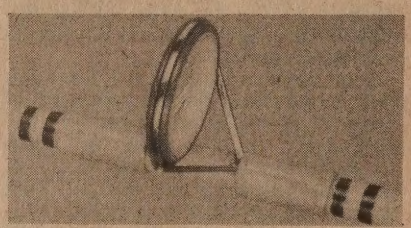
Thousands of men and women working on inland towboats, fishing boats, and other small craft are now eligible for certificates as Able Seamen as a result of a law which became effective October 6, 1980.

Until the passage of Public Law 96-378, any experience gained on inland waters or on vessels of less than 100 gross tons could not be used to qualify for an Able Seaman document, thereby "locking out" a significant pool of trained and capable personnel from the prospect of advancement of offshore vessels. The law now permits inshore time and experience on vessels of any size to be credited toward most Able Seman endorsements.

A person who has worked for 120 days at 12 hours per day on a river tow, for example, is now eligible for an AB certificate on a mineral and oil vessel of less than 500 gross tons. With 240 "12 hour" days, the person can obtain an AB document endorsed for service on any vessel of less than 500 gross tons, including coastal tugs and towboats.

Time on fishing boats can also be used to qualify for AB certificates, provided that the work is "on deck in duties closely related to that performed by Able Seamen."

In addition to having the minimum amount of vessel experience, Able Seaman applicants must pass a physical examination and take a rigorous written test administered by the Coast Guard. For information on application procedures, contact Maritime Training Services, 504-733-9013.



EAGLE CLAW'S EXCLUSIVE GUIDE WRAP SYSTEM

Only available on Eagle Claw rods manufactured by the Wright & McGill Co. of Denver, Colorado, the new exclusive guide wraps on the Eagle Claw line of Denco Super IV called "nylok," promises to be a new and better way to secure guides to the rod blade.

This internationally patented process eliminates the conventional thread wrap that holds guides in place. The solid, seamless nylon wrap holds each guide securely in place and this new durable material eliminates virtually all wrap wear and without the use of thread, there is no fraying and no upkeep.

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"NITE-GLO" WHITING RIG

Bob Huelsenbeck, President of Four Seasons Rigs, Toms River, N.J., announced the addition of a new Whiting/Ling fishing rig labeled "NITE-GLO" to his already popular line of fishing rigs. This particular rig's success is due to the special coated length of tubing which is added to the hook shank. A blue-green glow, similar to that of a sand eel, is given off and the whiting just seem to love it. Exposure to any type of light will enhance the tube's glow, thus making it more attractive. Also added to this rig is a longer leader to the bottom loop, and this has proven its worth by catching both ling and cod. Night test results have met with tremendous success, and equal results were found on dull cloudy days.

CAPTREE

COD

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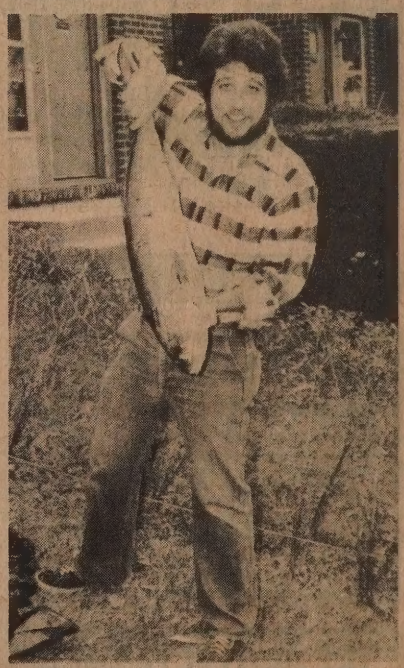

This giant blue was caught aboard the "Viking Star" on their last night bluefishing trip. Bob Kaufman and Tom Getty had 20 fish up to 20 lbs. fishing the Cartwright Grounds.

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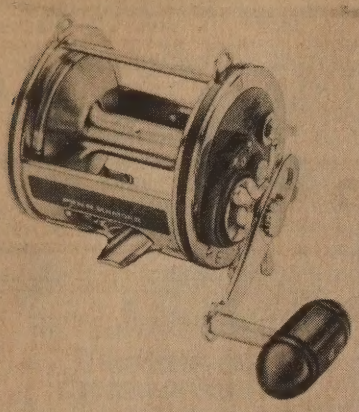

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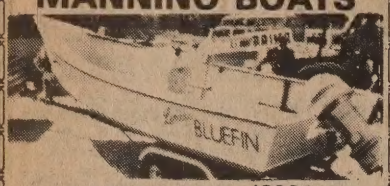

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ing the rod style (spinning, casting, fly, trolling, etc.), the labels list recommended types of fish each rod is designed for; i.e., Spinning—Recommended for, but not limited to: Walleye, Northern Pike and Bass.

BATT-BOX RECHARGEABLE POWER PACK FROM MORROW

A new portable rechargeable power supply for fish finders and depth sounders has been introduced by Morrow Electronics, Inc. of Salem, Oregon.

The new accessory, called the Batt-Box, can deliver approximately 24 hours of 12-volt power between rechargings, and can be recharged 300 times over its expected lifetime of four to five years with normal use.

A gelled electrolyte power cell lies at the heart of the Batt-Box. Water never needs to be added, a convenience feature which also makes the unit spillproof and leakproof. A patented, one-way relief valve prevents the internal buildup of gases through overcharging or high temperatures. An internal fuse protects against short circuits.

The Batt-Box can be recharged overnight. Its detachable AC/DC charger cord plugs into any standard wall outlet. The unit can be operated to the point of complete discharge without damage.

A wide base and low center of gravity keeps the Batt-Box upright even in rough water. Its rugged aluminum casing is splash-proof, and further protected by a coating of epoxy paint. Its mounting bracket, which doubles as a convenient carrying handle, accepts the Morrow S-6, S-6TA, S-10, S-10TA, S-60, and S-60TA fish finders, and DS-200A and DS-200TA digital depth sounders.

The Batt-Box measures 7.5" x 4.8" x 3.4", and weighs 6.6 lbs.

Additional information regarding the Batt-Box and the full line of other Morrow products can be obtained from the Morrow Electronics Marketing Department, P. O. Box 7078, Salem, Oregon 97303.

1981 HEDDON CATALOG RELEASED

The 24-page Heddon 1981 catalog is now available. In full color, 35 different lures are featured including eight new lures: Popeye, Wee Tad, Rattle Sonic, Preyfish, Sculpin, Sounder, Moss Boss and Jolly-Wally. All totaled, 118 colors are available this year in the biggest lure color lineup available anywhere in the world.

New Heddon spoons now compliment a complete line of floating lures, floating-diving, diving, sinking and spinners.

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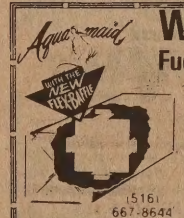

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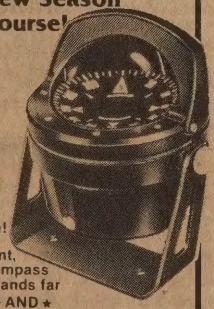

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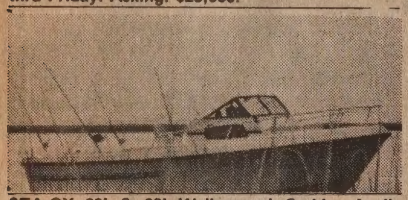

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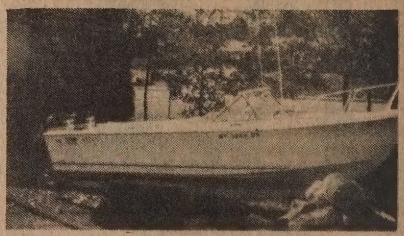

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NATIONAL SCENE

(Continued from page 7.)

would be a blitz effort on the part of the scientific community to study this beautiful fish and suggest means of preventing another complete collapse of the fishery. Unfortunately, there has been little study and no attempts at conservation. We still don't even know where the fish are coming from though the decline of the spring spawning runs would seem to indicate that the big July schools have moved up from the Chesapeake—rather than out of local bays. Let's hope that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the individual states quickly make a real attempt to learn more about the weakfish, before we find that it's faded into near oblivion once again!

We'll have more observations on 1980 fishing in our next column.

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